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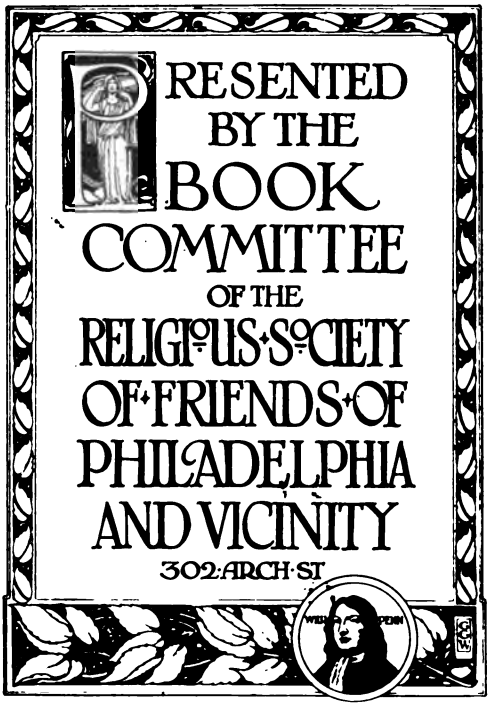

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MAN'S RELATION TO GOD

PENNSBURY SERIES of Modern Quaker Books

MAN'S RELATION TO GOD

AND OTHER ADDRESSES

BY

JOHN WILHELM ROWNTREE

WITH LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

AND INTRODUCTION BY

RUFUS M. JONES, M.A., D.Litt.

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CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION BY RUFUS M. JONES . . . 9

JOHN WILHELM ROWNTREE, BY JOSHUA ROWNTREE 13

MAN'S RELATION TO GOD: FIVE ADDRESSES 33

I. WHAT IS WORSHIP? 35

II. MAY WE BELIEVE IN GOD? 55

III. WHAT HAS JESUS TO SAY TO THE INDIVIDUAL? 75

IV. WHAT HAS JESUS TO SAY TO THE STATE? . . 93

V. FAITH AND LIFE 113

GOD IN CHRIST, I. 131

" II.—THE PRODIGAL SON . . . 143

FAMILY EXCLUSIVENESS 153

THE PROBLEM OF A FREE MINISTRY. . . . 163

TO RISE AGAIN—A SERMON 175

IN MEMORIAM 189

INTRODUCTION

Busy as it is with material tasks, the world still listens to spiritual prophets, when once it is convinced that they actually *are* prophets, and have come, like an earlier one, "from God to bear witness to the Light." Nothing after all matters so much to serious men and women like us, in a world like ours, as do fresh revelations of God and convincing evidence that He is near us and for us and with us; and when one among us has come into intimate fellowship with Him and speaks with first-hand authority of what he has seen and handled, we are ready to give attention to his living words.

This tremendous hour has suddenly revealed the fact to us, as we never saw it before, that we cannot *stand the world* now without God. Once we might have jogged along and have done our common tasks, or have run through our ordinary pursuits, half unconscious that there must be something more in our universe than we see with our dull eyes; but now we are shaken wide awake and we know with startling clearness that we cannot get on in any real fashion without a Divine Companion. The powerful recrudescence of superstition, the wide-spread craving for the supernatural, the intense interest in "revivals," and the eagerness of men everywhere to read what a popular novelist has to tell of his discovery of "God," make unmistakably clear the fact that the heart of man to-day is profoundly troubled, and that his hands are knocking anxiously at the door where he hopes help may be found.

But while the need is great and the search for Light is an urgent one, the real guides are still, as always, rare. It would surely seem that this time must eventually bring forth a major prophet who can authoritatively speak to the age

out of eternity, but while we are waiting for him to come we may well turn to those of lesser stature who at least can start us on the right track and give us sure Light.

I am confident that the man whose life and message are given in this book is one of these "real guides" and that the Light which came through him was from God and still shows the way to God. He wrote in 1897: "We want to translate Christ into modern terms—to make Him real and to present Him in such a way that the appeal shall command the intellect and take a practical hold of life." To the great service expressed in those words, written when he was twenty-nine, he dedicated his life. He had come, as he once said in a personal letter, "to a real and living experience of the saving knowledge of God in Christ," and he felt henceforth that his main business on earth was that of interpreting the Christ-Life, the Heart of God, to his generation. Earnest seekers are bound to get help from one who can say as he did: "There comes a time when the higher life, of which I am always aware, and which I have tried to follow, becomes so merged in my thought of Christ and my devotion to Him that I can hardly distinguish the two in my mind. There comes a time when suddenly I am on my knees, my whole soul flooded with light and love, tears in my heart and eyes, an unspeakable peace enfolding me. The pierced hands have reached through to me at last and draw me gently forth to Him."

There is of course no adequate substitute for the living personality suffused with warmth and intimacy. Printed words are far less dynamic and convincing than is a radiant embodied life, yet when haply a man succeeds in putting his personal conviction into his words and makes his sentences quick and vital with the "life-blood of a master spirit" his work can go on powerfully even after he is gone.

That is fortunately true of John Wilhelm Rowntree.

There is a living pulse in this little book. The reader will, I am sure, feel it beat and he will reverently read on arrested and attracted by the testimony of one who has *arrived.* Here was a man, thoroughly human, a genuine child of his time, beset with the baffling problems of a scientific and critical epoch, fearless in his questioning, forced to drink bitter cups of suffering, knowing in his own soul the meaning of the cross, who nevertheless overcame, achieved a real triumph of spirit, realised a companionship with God which transformed him through and through, and who, by divine assistance, became a spiritual leader among us. We cannot allow his inspiring influence to wane or vanish. We desire instead that even more powerfully than ever before he may now speak to the perplexed and distressed in this war-worn period, and that the vital message of his life and thought may bring comfort and assurance and spiritual victory to hundreds who have never seen the man whom we that knew him loved and followed.

RUFUS M. JONES.

Haverford, Pennsylvania.
7th September, 1917.

JOHN WILHELM ROWNTREE.

THE endeavour has been made in this volume to bring together and perpetuate the essays and addresses which it it is believed John Wilhelm Rowntree set most store by, as representing his deepest desires and highest aims.

They show that to their author the enrichment of the spirit of man was the greatest boon that could be conferred upon him. He sought to nourish his own soul in the best pastures, and by the purest springs he could find. His enjoyments grew by sharing, and so the necessity was laid upon him of ministering to others in thoughts divine, no less than in things temporal.

Young as he was when the end came, keenly as he enjoyed life, greatly as he delighted in art and in beauty wherever he found them, his words were weighted with his own experience when he called to his comrades—" 'gather the rosebuds while ye may,' but gather them not for mere selfish enjoyment. Such roses turn to ashes, they have neither the bloom nor the sweet scent of the roses which grow in the garden of eternal love. There is no freshness of dew upon them." And so in a thoroughly manly fashion, he sought to turn the world's gardens into gardens of the Lord. He placed character before intellect, and the awakening of the soul first. He was keenly alive to the difficulties, to some minds more especially, in the acceptance of the historical Christ, but he had found for himself "a living bridge which links us to the past," and that "the personal knowledge of God as revealed in Christ, convicting us of selfishness, searching out our sin, destroying in its pure flame the dross of our lower nature, is an experience which banishes doubt, and demands no explanation." He longed exceedingly to see the simple, practical, true-hearted life of Christianity, as set

forth in the New Testament, become a mighty power in the land; and for this he spent his life fearlessly and joyously.

John Wilhelm Rowntree was the eldest son of Joseph Rowntree of York, the head of the Cocoa firm there and the co-author of "The Temperance Problem and Social Reform." He came of a long line of Quaker ancestry on his father's side; through his mother, whose maiden name was Seebohm, he was descended from a Swedish officer who went over to Germany with Gustavus Adolphus during the Thirty Years' War, and afterwards settled in that country. He was born on the 4th September, 1868, in a home in which thought for others was a portion of his inheritance.

An old housemaid of the family wrote after his death, that "Master John was always such a little gentleman." Whether this explains a tradition current about his infancy (before he had learned to speak), that, having been taken to some Scarborough lodgings, he rebelled so loudly against the wall-paper of the room first allotted to him and to his nurse, that another nursery had to be found, it might be hazardous to say. It is more certain that as a boy he was straight and honourable, but easily roused and passionate. At these times his language is said to have been highly impressive to the victims against whom it was directed. Occasionally he might hurl a chair at an offender, or roast the wax doll of a sister, or direct a hose pipe into a kitchen window, to avenge injuries received from an unsympathetic cook; but even these things were not done boisterously, but rather on "principles of honour," as the delightful servant to George Borrow in Spain used to explain his escapades. His thirst for knowledge set in early. His generalship and inventiveness showed itself in boyhood, in indoor games, but, most strikingly, in acting. It is said that one of his fancies in his teens was to have been an actor if only his deafness had not prohibited this. He was by no means the good boy, or peacemaker, of

the family. He was perhaps most distinguished for "throwing himself tremendously into things" to which he gave himself. He had a fine disregard for the value of money. To all who knew him in later life these few touches may give vivid impressions of the long conflicts that must have been waged and won in the moulding of his character, as it grew up into the light of noon-day.

John was educated at the Friends' School at Bootham, York, and at Oliver's Mount School at Scarborough. He was not distinguished in his classes, caring more for men than mathematics, and the deafness already alluded to shut him out from many of the games of the playground. To the onlooker he would have passed as a delicate child, observant and quick, not sympathetic, inclined to be quizzical, and for a schoolboy, careful of his appearance. One of his masters writes of his schooldays, "J. W. R., as I remember him, was undoubtedly a boy of good natural ability, but being far from robust had never learned to use it effectively. He was not of a happy, contented disposition. He had not developed the genial brightness which was so striking on all occasions when I have met him latterly." To this he adds, "No one knows what he has been to some of us."

On leaving school he went at once into the Cocoa Works at York, and though not naturally methodical, he applied himself to business with extraordinary energy and diligence. Beginning in a very subordinate position, he rapidly fitted himself for more responsible posts, and won and retained the esteem and friendship of the employees with whom he was associated. At this time he had not learned to measure his physical strength, and a certain degree of irritability from overstrain was often noticeable. In the later years of his life this irritability was so fully mastered that few even of his personal friends knew of the struggle before the

victory. His impetuosity of mind and disposition became gradually disciplined, without any loss of executive force or administrative skill.

Perhaps his most noteworthy characteristic, from the time of leaving school to his death, was that of all round growth. He was not born a saint. As he consciously entered the life which is "life indeed," his whole nature seemed to reach up to the light, and to grow towards it. His humanity became wider and more tender as his spiritual faculties grew in power and depth. This upward wrestling was not without its cost, even to the last. He was often greatly depressed at the seeming ineffectiveness of his work. Now and then he felt as if he had lost all power of helping others. He would then turn resolutely to some other line of service, or plunge into some hard reading. He would not allow slackness to prevail against him.

Whilst he was still struggling to obtain a secure foundation foothold of faith, religion became to John Wilhelm Rowntree the most real quest of his life. Humanity stood out before him as the highest of created things, and yet as sorely in need of compassion and of uplifting. He recognised the many ways in which sympathy could be shown, and aid be given to man, in body, soul, and spirit. He was keenly interested in art, in politics, in social reform, and in education, but religion to him held the key of all the rest; and as it grew to be a living reality in his own experience, he spared no time or thought or trouble to make it a reality to others. "Religion and life are one, or neither is anything," became a cherished maxim with him. In his youthful ardour and longing for fearless sincerity, he was no doubt often crude in his utterances, often perturbing to the watchmen of his spiritual Zion versed in the watchwords of a former generation; but from the outset he sought for an underlying unity in the many diversities of thought and language, and those who

knew him best saw that the great utterance of the Master, "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching," became more and more applicable to his case.

Adult School work, which had long been carried on in York, was an important factor in the growth of John's thought and character. It has been described by him as having

"its basis in the promotion of a vivid sense of human fellowship, rooted in an all-embracing Divine Love. The small gatherings are, or should be, in the family spirit; their, intensely human character, their simplicity, their freedom from conventional restraint, tend to keep them close to the difficult problems of life. These are too often left in the church porch, but in the Adult Schools they are, so to speak, laid on the table. . . .

"The Adult Schools may be but the bridge to a different form of church fellowship, but at least they are a bridge."*

On leaving school he accompanied his father for some time to the parent Adult School in Lady Peckitt's Yard, but after a few years the determination to launch out into extension work grew upon him, and, almost single-handed, he established a school in the neighbouring village of Acomb, in June, 1893, when he was not twenty-five years old. A number of railway employees had come to live in the village, and the eager young teacher soon gathered a large company of intelligent men around him. Many of them were largely imbued with the questioning spirit of the age, and no commonplace presentations of truth would suffice to hold them. Piles of notebooks and MSS. remain to show the pains he took to give his hearers the best within his reach.

He thought twelve hours a week none too much time for

* "History of Adult School Movement," by J. W. Rowntree and H. B. Binns. Headley Brothers, London (*now out of print*).

the preparation of Sunday's lesson, and rose early, or sat up late to obtain them.

The most varied fields of knowledge were searched for their spoils, and the reapings were all made to subserve the deepest purposes of life. One short sample of these notes may be of interest:—

"July 22nd, 1894, Acomb.

"Read Addison's 'The spacious firmament on high,' quoted in Paine's 'Age of Reason.'

"We have been dealing with the development of life from protoplasm and have seen how in one direction from chlorophyll and protoplasm we may have the development up to the daisy; in the other direction through varying forms up to man. There is a volume of God's nature library we have not opened, and which we will first peep into before proceeding with the social and moral development of man." [Then follow some stiff but charming geological notes on the formation of rocks].

"Geological examination of ourselves will reveal the fact that our character is a stratified rock, each day laying a layer.

" 'Little drops of water, little grains of sand,' etc.

"Life is made up of hundreds of little microscopic decisions between right and wrong. Importance of little things."

In his lessons he cared yet more about drawing out than putting in. At the outset, he would ask any one who could not follow what he was saying, to stop him at once. He welcomed interruptions gladly and would at once turn to a blackboard, or vary his illustration to make things clear. He watched the faces of the class, and when once he felt sure he had them with him it was not always easy to stop; but he insisted on some time for questions at the end, and in this he was rarely disappointed. His deafness was, of course, a difficulty, but to ensure everyone having a chance, the Secretary, or someone who knew the men, would sit beside

him and make sure that no question was passed by; now and then he would promise to answer a question the next Sunday. "The only thing that ever did upset him" (one of the men said to the writer) "was to find a scholar in favour of war." "But he never offended the class. We saw how he liked honest opinions from everybody, and how he wanted us all to think. He would teach more in a few words than some men could in a day." "There never was anything of self about him."

On 28th July, 1892, John Wilhelm Rowntree was married to Constance M. Naish, of Bristol. His home life, first at York and then at Scalby, was one of exceeding happiness. It was lavishly shared with friends of all ranks and conditions. He and his young wife threw open their house to members of the School once a week, and formed a reading circle to assist them. The Acomb men had six or seven miles to walk from the railway shops to their homes, and then to John's house and back, yet there would be twenty to thirty of them in his drawing room on Thursday nights, ready to read Clodd's "Childhood of Religion," or Kidd's "Social Evolution," and to discuss them to the full, *but* not to the end,—for that was often left to the North-Eastern Railway workshops.

Although he had to lay down his regular Adult School teaching later, he never lost his love for the Movement. In the last year of his life he gave, on generous terms, a house and garden in Scalby to be a Guest House for Adult Scholars. Its name, "Friedensthal" (The Valley of Peace), has been felt to be truly appropriate by many a tired working man or woman.

John's wife ever relieved him of household cares, but he did not lose sight of home duties in the far vistas that were constantly opening out before him. He confessed one Sunday to feeling tired at the close of a morning meeting

for worship at Scarborough, but said he must return home and come in again at night; as his home was three miles away he was pressed to stay and rest. He replied decisively that he had promised "Violet" to take her out in her perambulator, and must do it. Violet, his youngest child, was then a person of about a year old. She was duly driven forth, and the tired man came back again to the evening meeting.

In person, John Wilhelm Rowntree was tall and erect. He had a frank and manly bearing; and in later years especially, there was always the readiness for a smile behind his straightforward earnestness of purpose. If his sense of humour softened it grew richer with his ripening years. His fun seemed to come from two unfailing springs—his splendid hopefulness and his vivacious kindliness.

No portrait of him would be correct which did not succeed in conveying the definite impression that he was "an all round splendid and vigorous companion."

His power of helping many other people was to be found largely in his own ability to get the fullest enjoyment out of every circumstance of life. No one had a greater delight in holiday making than had John, and few people could tell such humorous stories. He tremendously enjoyed most forms of athletics, and in winter all indoor games of a social character,—not just out of sympathy for others, but because he liked such pleasures himself; and this was not in his immature stage only, but continued all through his life, although his interest in more important things grew stronger.

Allusion has been made to his early deafness. As the years went on a serious contraction of the power of sight, greatly restricting the field of vision, took place. In any dim light he could no longer see the way before him. The stumbling over a child on one occasion greatly pained him. One of the best physicians was consulted. He could hold out no hope

of improvement, or even of the arrestment of the evil, and John went out from the consultation into the street under a doom of coming and irreparable blindness. He stood by some railings for a few moments to collect himself, and "suddenly felt the love of God wrap him about as though a visible presence enfolded him, and a joy filled him such as he had never known before."* Instead of retreating before this insidious foe and leaving human wrongs to right themselves, as men would readily have excused him for doing, he only sought the more continually to fit himself for efficient service for God and his fellows, during every day which might yet be given him. In many remarkable ways he turned "his necessity to glorious gain." Any one watching him felt that the gates that barred his vision only shut out the foreground, not the distance. The depicting of him as "with blind eyes luminous" is not inapt.

Though perforce an ambassador in bonds, he was yet no invalid. He had great enjoyment in life, and remained strong physically. His abounding labours put the inertia of most men without any such limitations to shame. He placed himself under an American specialist, and at the cost of severe regimen and treatment, the onward ravages of the complaint were stayed. His endeavours to reconcile his passion for work with due obedience to his medical advisers often caused subdued amusements to his friends. He was ever ready to explain that a time of rest was coming speedily, when one or two things had been put right first.

In 1899, John was ordered to give up town life and daily attendance at business, and betake himself to a country home.

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* This sentence is taken from the account of J. W. R. in the *American Friend*, by Rufus M. Jones.

He wrote at this time:—

"York,
"September 19th, 1899.

" . . . It is a discipline, doing nothing, to which I find it hard to yield. . . .

"Apparently we shall have to leave York soon, and as building is so slow, I am looking to take a country house somewhere, and not build for a few years. The change in one's life will be considerable, but I quite hope it will have its real compensations. The one thing I dread is to have my work in the Society of Friends restricted. I know it doesn't mean much in any case, but it is what I care most about."

He chose a house at Scalby, near Scarborough, quickly found pleasure in his new surroundings, gave himself eagerly to his garden, and began, as he said, to "intensify cabbages." Happily this application of chemistry reacted favourably on himself, and injured nobody. In reality the change of residence enabled him to give much of the energy hitherto devoted to business to objects nearer to his heart. He turned with redoubled desire to the "intensifying" of the Society of Friends.

Those who knew him will bear witness that John Wilhelm Rowntree's was one of the most catholic of minds. He believed that the religion of Christ brought out and nourished all that was best in man,—that this religion was intended by its Founder to be a lay, every-day religion, with His cross-bearing as its altar of sacrifice; with a ministry open to all who felt its call, a common fellowship of service, and great liberty in the exercise of spiritual gifts.

He saw that this vision had been realised to a remarkable extent in the early days of Quakerism, and he believed that the re-awakening of such a spiritual power in the land would far more than repay all the efforts that could be bestowed upon it.

He visited Friends' Meetings widely, in England and

America, and from 1899 to 1902 he edited a fresh and stimulating monthly periodical, entitled "Present Day Papers."

The testimony of the Society of Friends against all war, maintained throughout its history, was upheld by him with a passionate conviction, and the South African War whilst it lasted was a perpetual pain to him. Two brief extracts from letters at that time indicate his thoughts upon it.

"January 15th, 1900.

"The whole affair is so sickening that it is working upon me like a nightmare."

"January 31st, 1900.

"The Society of Friends has been lamentably weak upon this wretched war. I have been appalled at the falling away among our younger people especially. I feel that one lesson of the war for us as a church is the need for the proper instruction of our *own* people. Each generation has to recapture for itself its spiritual heritage, and we need to seize upon the opportunity this war gives us for the restatement of our principles in terms which will appeal to a new generation. It is quite a mistake to assume that our young people will grow up 'right upon the war question,' unless we take the proper steps to inculcate our principles."

His high ideal of Quakerism is shown in the following extracts from letters:—

"At present our work is that of tillers of the soil. . . . I believe it is of the utmost importance while pressing, as Paul pressed it, the *practical side* of Christianity, to insist no less on the essential spirituality of the Christian life. The transcendental and mystic element in religion has generally failed an an effective force on any considerable scale, not so much I think because of the innate difficulties of the spiritual life, but because it lacked too largely in the tangible things that men could get hold of—was not sufficiently practical—while on the other hand, we see the very definite limitations which are set to *merely* practical work (I am using 'practical'

in a partial sense of course, for there surely ought to be no antithesis between a practical and a truly spiritual life—the former ought to spring out of the latter).

"I come back again to my old friend Edward Caird's statement at the close of his 'Evolution of Religion.' We need a religion which shall take count of the whole complex nature of man, shall satisfy his reason and his heart, and really meet the needs of the new time. The world waits for this."

"I do not believe we shall get very far with an appeal for simpler living and plainer, purer ways of life, unless we can associate these ideas with the Christ, and show them forth as essential to a true perception and grasp of Christianity as a living faith. We want to translate Christ into modern terms—to make Him real, and to present Him in such a way that the appeal shall command the intellect and take a practical hold of life.

"If, as a Society, we could present the Christ-ideal both as it affects the individual and the community—show Him as the heart of all that is true in art and literature—as the force which makes for social progress, the development of the highest and best in men and nations, focussing Him in all the various efforts and graspings after light, we would, I think, soon speak so that men would listen. The work wanted now is much the same as that of George Fox—it is to dig deeper than the modern pessimist, and show him the living rock he has never yet struck, which is the ground of our optimism and faith. . . . It is appalling, when we contemplate it, how few have a real knowledge of God as something more than a superintendent engineer of the Universe, or of Christ as something more real than a factor in a theological proposition."

When he spoke in Friends' Meeting for Worship, his sermons were often thoughts springing from books just read, or passing events which had strongly arrested his attention. He would ponder on the relationship of these to the highest truths, and prepare his mind to speak with clearness upon them. The "blank sheet" frame of mind in worship stood for slothfulness to him, but on the other hand he anxiously

sought to be sensitive to all intimations of Divine guidance, and to the actual needs of those present; speaking, or withholding, accordingly. It was striking at times to note how fine his perception was as to the state of a meeting, although he had heard but little of any previous utterances. Under the same desire to make the best of himself, he took great pains to learn how to use and to modulate his voice. His deafness made this a hard task, but he persevered, and succeeded to a surprising extent in mastering his difficulties. His ministry has been thus described by one who often heard it:—*

"John Wilhelm Rowntree's utterances were enriched by his study of the best that has been thought and said in the world, by his knowledge of German art, particularly that of Dürer and Holbein, and of some of the obscurer artists of the Renaissance, by his vivid recollections of his visit to the Holy Land, by his keen eye for form and colour in landscape, and by his intimate acquaintance with religious history. But all this scarcely goes to the root of the matter. He spoke effectively because he felt deeply. It was heart speaking to heart. His influence over young men and women was due in large measure to the fact that his experience, no less than his imagination, enabled him to put himself in their place. He had felt the difficulties, moral as well as intellectual, which prevent many thoughtful minds from accepting the Christian synthesis, and he never attempted to minimise them. His manly sincerity made it impossible for him to use the stock phrases of the religious vocabulary when they had come to have for him a meaning different from that in which they had been understood in the past. So he boldly proclaimed the fact of Christ in words having the same content as when used in everyday life. Of a singularly refined and reticent nature, and with no trace of egotism in his composition, he was yet constrained by the power of the divine love which had made its home with him,

* E. R. Cross, *British Friend*, April, 1905.

to present Christ to his hearers in the light of his own experience.

"He had found the solution of the problem of suffering in the revelation of a suffering God, and his conscious realisation of the love of Christ in his own heart came to him when he had entered into the fellowship of His sufferings. And so there was something about his ministry, both in public worship and personal intercourse, peculiarly comforting to all who mourned, or were in anxiety and distress."

The strong individuality of his faith, and the freedom with which he stated it, at times disturbed those whose spiritual attainments he regarded as far in advance of his own; but no one who knew him questioned the reality of his communion with God. In one of his last letters the confession, "having come myself to a real and living experience of the saving knowledge of God in Christ," is given as the reason for his whole-hearted desire to help others who might still be facing the difficulties he had passed through himself.

A further insight into his religious experience is given in a letter written a few months previously, referring to a volume lent to him by a friend.

". . . My real difficulty with the book is, that it seems to me to fail just at the point where failure is most disastrous, and it is not enough for me to regard Jesus as the most perfect of men.

"I do feel that the orthodox have been too timorous and reticent in dwelling upon the humanity of Christ. But whatever be the theological interpretation of the word 'divinity,' Jesus is for me the meeting-point of the human and divine—of man and God. His value to me is not merely that He tells us of the divine in men, but that in Himself He reveals to us, through the Scriptures, the human side of the character of God.

"We make a huge assumption if we say that God cannot directly reveal Himself to man on His manward side; and

that He did so in Jesus is what I mean by 'divinity.' As a supreme effort towards God, Jesus would indeed be great, but the dynamic of Jesus lies surely in His being an effort of God towards man.

"Mr. A———'s book leaves the great gulf that yawned at the feet of Plato unbridged. His view, beautiful though it be, does not, from my standpoint, meet the deepest needs of a sinful world."

To this may be added the remark made on one occasion to a friend, "To me the cross of Christ contains the revelation that *sin hurts God.*"

One other reminiscence of his ministry, personal and public, may be cited here:—*

"To him a man could open out his mind and lay bare his difficulties as to no other friend, and he who had gone through the gloomy sea of doubt was able to reach out a saving hand to those who felt themselves alone amid the waters. Around him, too, the most diverse natures could gather and come into touch with each other; 'he was the clearing-house to which we all brought our thoughts,' said one of his friends and fellow-workers to me, as we talked of what his going meant to us . . . to know him was to be his debtor.

"The last time on which I heard him speak in public was when he came last autumn to give the opening address at a series of religious discussions at Toynbee Hall. It was a new experiment, begun not without anxiety, and no easy task awaited him. But as he unfolded his thought before that audience of critical men, most of them hostile to the very name of Christianity, one felt how his words went home; a hush fell at times over opponents who would have been eager to scoff at a faith less deep and less sincere, and the honest doubter must have felt within himself the answering witness which the speaker was striving to arouse, as he set forth to us the unique Revelation of God in the Personality of Christ. He could not see all his audience, nor hear all the words that were used in argument, but he had a vision of

* T. E. Harvey, M. P., in *Bootham*, May, 1905.

that which our eyes discerned not, and his spirit listened to the silence of God."

It is impossible to do more than touch lightly upon the many forms of active work for the Society of Friends carried out or planned for the future by John Wilhelm Rowntree. The Summer School Movement which has opened out to very many souls new possibilities of Christian fellowship and communion and a higher level of spiritual intelligence, was largely inspired and worked by him. Into the establishment of the permanent Friends' Settlement for religious and social study at Woodbrooke, near Birmingham, (made possible by the generosity of George Cadbury), he threw his time, thought and affection without measure.

The holding of the Yearly Meeting in the provinces, after some two and a quarter centuries of London Yearly Meetings only, was largely due to his advocacy, and to his strong desire that this annual gathering should tell more upon the life of the world around it.

He was preparing the material for a history of Quakerism, a modern apologia for its place in Christendom, which he estimated as likely to prove a ten years' task, and for which he had collected more than two thousand volumes and pamphlets.

"I shall hope," he wrote, "so to proportion my work day by day,—as to keep this study going, and at the same time remain sufficiently in touch with contemporary affairs, although undoubtedly this undertaking involves a certain withdrawal from work which would otherwise have been undertaken. I feel clear that if it can be accomplished, having regard to the far distant future, it is the work that needs doing, and may have a direct and practical effect upon the policy of the Society. Naturally, I feel my own limitations acutely, but the sense of the need has rested on

my mind for some years, and I feel that it is right to make the attempt."*

The Adult School Holiday Home at Scalby has been already referred to. As the scheme matured John was building a home for himself on land adjoining the Guest House. He needed and deserved a quiet home more than most men, but he used to say that the danger of a comfortable country home was the lessening of opportunity for serving others, and he planned it for others as much as for himself. The hall was to be large enough for lectures, and on the second floor was a long and pleasant dormitory with fifteen cubicles, to take in an overflow of guests from "Friedensthal" on occasions of pressure. The erection of a pavilion was also contemplated, for the accommodation of week-end conferences, or local Summer Schools.

The working builder employed upon this house said to the writer that most men when you came to have dealings with them had two sides to their natures—a business side and a religious side—but with John Wilhelm Rowntree, keen though he was to get his work done, there was only one united whole.

Early in 1905, in the midst of all these hopes and efforts, John's sight was again a cause of anxiety, and a visit to his American specialist loomed suddenly before him. The treatment on the last occasion had been painful, but he never hesitated. For himself, he said he would prefer to stay at his work and take the risks; but his powers were

* The preparations for this work were perfected under the editorship of John's beloved friend, Rufus M. Jones, Professor of Philosophy at Haverford College, U. S. A. Four volumes have already appeared, viz., "Studies in Mystical Religion," and "Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries," by the Editor; "The Beginnings of Quakerism," by W. C. Braithwaite, and "The Quakers in the American Colonies," by Rufus M. Jones and others.

a trust for others, and so the best advice obtainable must decide. He chose to go at once in order that he might be back before the Yearly Meeting at Leeds.

Shortly before sailing, he presided at the annual meeting of shareholders of the firm in which he was a director, making a masterly speech on the aims and policy of the business, and the importance of the social work carried on among the employees. His last Sunday in England was spent at York. He gave an address in connection with the laying of the foundation stone of a new Adult School at Burton Lane. A grand sunrise had suggested a passage in 1 Thessalonians v. and he dwelt on the light as revealing love to man in the love of God. This was followed by a sermon in the meeting house on the victory of faith, leading from simple beginnings to "life on the heights," whilst in touch with humanity in the valley. This true sunlight on the soul was for life's morning, not only for its noontide or its evening. He closed very impressively by quoting as a morning hymn,

> "Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes,
> Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
> Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee,
> In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me."

His wife accompanied him to America, intending to return in time for the opening of the Guest House.

Pneumonia seized him on his way across the Atlantic. His friend and comrade, Rufus M. Jones, came on board the ship in New York harbour, and assisted in providing the most skilful help obtainable, but the traveller's brave stewardship of life ended three days after the landing. All that was mortal of him was laid to rest by the kindest of Friends in the burial ground at Haverford, not far from

Penn's city of Brotherly Love. But his life lives on, and will live.

NOTE.—This biographical preface has been compiled by S. Elizabeth Robson, from the introductions written by Joshua Rowntree to "Essays and Addresses" and "Palestine Notes."

MAN'S RELATION TO GOD.

THE best introduction to this, the last series of addresses written by John Wilhelm Rowntree, is to be found in extracts from a letter dated 17. ii. 1905, written to three Friends in Manchester, Croydon and Darlington meetings respectively.

"I have for some time felt a desire to express in a form less fugitive than an isolated address, such a measure of Gospel truth as I have personally been enabled to grasp. You may call the proposed addresses a statement of the Quaker view of life, for they are a Quaker's view, and I believe in harmony with the inner conception of Truth which has come to our branch of the Universal Church; but my desire is not so much to emphasise the denominational label nor even to confine myself to a Quaker audience, as to reach a wide circle of thoughtful people of all denominations or of none.

"The scheme of addresses is as follows:—

"The first paper entitled 'What is Worship?' deals with the present indifference to public worship, its significance, the efforts of the churches to meet it, the true meaning of worship, its personal character, the work of worship and communion with God.

"The second paper supposes the difficulty of the ordinary man whose thought of God is indefinite, and the question is asked 'May we believe in God?' I attempt to sketch the main philosophical arguments, to indicate their weakness, and finally to treat of the relation of the message and personality of Jesus Christ to the need for a personal view of God.

"This brings me to the difficulty of the historical records. In the third paper I ask 'Is the Bible Inspired?' and after

attempting a statement of the true meaning of inspiration I endeavour to state the true line of approach to the final problem of the basis of belief.

"Having cleared the ground as far as I am able, I state in the fourth paper what I conceive to be the 'Message of Jesus to the Individual;' in the fifth paper the 'Message of Jesus to the State,' and in the final paper, which I have named 'Faith and Life,' I make an appeal for personal religion and prayer.

"I need hardly add that I make this proposal with a full consciousness of the very real shortcoming and limitation inevitable in the weakness of the human instrument. I can only trust that I have rightly interpreted the Father's will in desiring to take up this service, and leave the matter with your meeting, in the full confidence that if you do not feel easy to take up the proposal, it will be in right ordering."

[A break occurred in the proposed series of six lectures, owing to the sudden death of J. W. R.'s brother-in-law, Ernest Grace, of Bristol. The third lecture as planned, on the Inspiration of the Bible, was never actually written. A Friend kindly filled this gap in the place of the lecturer.]

MAN'S RELATION TO GOD.

I.—WHAT IS WORSHIP?

Scripture portion—Psalm cvii. 1-22.

I SUPPOSE everyone has a ready answer to such a simple question. Is it not clear that public worship is a commonplace of our social life?

Scarce a village without its hoary church with squat tower or tapering spire, grey with the weathering storms of five hundred winters. Scarce a village indeed without a chapel severely plain, its bleak windows and denominational credentials carved above a porch of uncertain style, its air of halting hospitality, yet reminiscent none the less of fervid revival and the strong cries of fearful or victorious souls. And in the towns a wealth of architectural piety from massive cathedral, well grounded in its social prestige, to the tin tabernacle of some struggling mission.

I am convinced however, in spite of this seemingly adverse evidence, that my question is far from superfluous.

What *is* worship?

We take commonplaces for granted but we do not always understand them.

Buildings for social worship may be frequent, but so is the neglect of social worship. Indeed this neglect is so striking that a great newspaper has been at pains to take a census of the worshippers of greater London, a census which was in progress during eleven months, from November, 1902, to November, 1903 (the month of August being excepted).

Four thousand and twenty-six places of worship, doing duty for a population of over 6,240,000 souls, claimed the attention of the enumerators. Four in five of that number

were found not to attend at any place of public worship, and in a ponderous volume of 518 pages the results and lessons of this great investigation are stated and discussed.

Nor is this all. The third series of Charles Booth's *magnum opus*, "The Life and Labour of London People," devotes seven substantial volumes to the religious influences of the metropolis in the closing decade of the nineteenth century. And in these volumes the subject of public worship is continually under notice.

Perhaps if we briefly examine these two works for the facts they give and the opinions they express, we shall clear the ground for a more profitable consideration of the larger question with which this discussion opened.

In considering, then, the subsidiary question, "Why do men neglect social worship?" I propose first rapidly to summarise the conclusions of Charles Booth.

He gives testimony at the outset to the power of conviction. Those who feel that they hold the truth and feel constrained to spread the knowledge of it are "comparatively few in number, but," says Mr. Booth, "the amount of work which they do is marvellous, and its influence on the lives of the whole population very great."

He proceeds however to dispel what he calls an "optimistic delusion common among religious bodies," namely, that all men are open to receive the Gospel, as presented, that is, by the organised Christian Churches.

He points to the confusion of ideas upon this point. One clergyman says that London should be treated as wholly heathen and worked from a central mission; another that all London is on the contrary thirsting for visitation. A third supposes that the people might be won over if the Bishop of Stepney had a Palace in the East End!

There is however a painful sense of failure on the part of the workers. Even the optimistic are despairing when

it comes to results, and make strenuous efforts to meet the situation.

But they appear to base their hopes very largely on what may be called "mechanical contrivances." There must be novelty. The people, they say, are ready enough for the Gospel, but the pill must be coated with sugar. The *Tit Bits* style must be cultivated in the sermons, and costly buildings of a confectionery type of architecture must be encouraged because they are supposed to attract. And yet these very "contraptions" are inadequate for success. Be all things to all men, is the motto. "Alas," says Mr. Booth "they are only all things to themselves and *something* to quite a narrow circle of sympathisers."

Moreover, cheap successes are ephemeral and in their result degrading.

"Highly coloured appeals," says Mr. Booth, "bring in a golden return, treats and blankets swell the list of mothers and children on the books of the undertaking, and above all the sectarian spirit binds and braces together the energies of the band of workers." But "when the poor are made the subjects of such ignoble competition the result is apt to show itself in cringing poverty with all its evils, lack of independence, hypocrisy and lies, accompanied by the contempt of those who stand aside."

The result is that between the churches and the people there is a want of respect.

"The churches have come to be regarded"—I quote Mr. Booth—"as the resorts of the well-to-do, and of those who are willing to accept the charity and patronage of people who are better off than themselves."

Viewing the situation entirely from the standpoint of the people, it is stated that the churches are regarded as insincere.

"The spirit of self-sacrifice inculcated in theory, is not observed among, or believed to be practised by, the members

of those churches in any particular degree, and this inconsistency is very critically and severely judged. The clergy and ministers have no authority that is recognised, but their professional character remains, and owing to it they perhaps lose influence. It is accounted their business to preach, they being paid to do it. . . . A life of voluntary poverty seems to be the only road to the confidence of the people in this matter."

A minister who is known for his humanitarian interests has influence, but, so says our investigator, "his doctrinal teaching carries no weight."

A liberalised form of Christianity as preached by some makes no better headway than the narrowly orthodox, and the doctrinal bickerings between the sects have a disastrous consequence in hindering the appeal of the Gospel.

Outside the Church, the great reason for non-attendance at worship is indifference to the spiritual life. The great mass of men have more leisure, but religion hardly gains. The maw of pleasure is not easy to fill. The appetite grows. Sunday is increasingly regarded as a day of recreation.

"What then is happening?" says Mr. Booth. "It is claimed that changes making for improvement are in progress amongst the working classes, that habits are becoming softened, that the influence of education is making itself felt, that intelligence is spreading; are then their interests becoming more political or more social, more intellectual or more material? No conclusive answer can be given. We only know that such interests as trade unions and friendly societies, co-operative effort, temperance propaganda and politics (including socialism), with newspapers and even books, are filling, in the mental life of the average working man, a larger space than in the past, and with some may be taking a place which might have been otherwise occupied by religious interests; but this usurpation and engrossment of the mind may probably be asserted much more confidently of pleasure,

amusement, hospitality and sport." To this cautious statement Mr. Booth adds:—"Amongst all the reasons for abstaining from public worship, genuine, conscientious, reasoned unbelief takes a very small place." Indifference, however, is the distinguishing mark of no particular class, it runs through all. On the other hand, "if those not seriously concerned far outnumber the rest, those deeply touched are drawn from all classes. It is the form of expression, rather than the profounder spiritual development of religion, that is affected by class, neither the highest mental training, nor its entire absence, leads particularly either to or from religion."

And finally, for the hint is pregnant with meaning, our author remarks *àpropos* of the abstention particularly of the working classes, "that it is to the warmth of welcome that success is mostly to be attributed when success is secured at all."

So much for Charles Booth. I have endeavoured in this severely compressed summary to make Mr. Booth's statement as far as possible in his own words, but where from necessity I have departed from them, I have been careful to reflect his own values and his own meaning.

We turn now to the printed report of the religious census, an inquiry of more recent date.

All of Mr. Booth's deductions are not accepted in this volume. That is hardly likely, for the influence of religion is difficult to estimate and easy to misinterpret. But in general the conclusions are the same.

Again we open with the testimony to the power of strong convictions.

"Wherever," says the Editor, Mr. Mudie Smith, "Wherever there is the right man in the pulpit, there are few if any empty pews. By the right man I do not mean a genius. On the contrary the preacher may be an 'extraordinarily ordinary' man so long as he possesses strong convictions, keen sympathies, and a magnetic personality."

Again there is the sense of failure and the desire to alter the mechanism of public worship. The same writer tells us that the second lesson of the census is "that the buildings we erect in the future must be the antithesis of those now in existence." . . . "Cold, repellent stone walls, forbidding divisive pews, some cushioned and others bare," . . . "must give place to large, handsome central halls, well lit and well ventilated, furnished throughout with seats of one pattern, which permit of no arbitrary divisions based on class distinctions." And not only must the outward appearance and fittings of the place of worship be altered but a strong plea is put in for an institutional church and for open-air preaching.

Percy Alden adds his testimony to the value of the "simply furnished, brightly lighted and well warmed" hall, and protests that the average chapel and mission room reminds him of nothing so much as "a mortuary." He would have them all pulled down and rebuilt, and, like Mr. Mudie Smith, pleads for the institutional character,—for concerts, socials, entertainments, lectures, in the same halls, during the week.

"The people," says Mr. Alden, " are tired of being preached at," and he quotes Meredith with satisfaction, "We all of us have a parlous lot too much pulpit in us." His ideal Church is "a large spacious building seating at least one thousand people, with a good organ, a platform instead of a pulpit, chairs instead of pews, surrounded by class-rooms and games rooms, with at least one smaller hall at the side, etc."

Mr. Walter Warren, writing for North London, supports Mr. Alden's views, and in his own way testifies to the need for conviction.

"What infinite, untold loss," he exclaims, "lies at the doors of dull, incompetent pastors, the men who are lazy

in body and brain," who preach without devoting consecutive thought to the subject in hand, in hackneyed phrases, "and all of it emptied out like a pail of odds and ends over the hapless heads of the hearers."

Mr. Alden, like Mr. Booth, condemns the blatant "charity" which, using the word in Mr. Booth's sense, always degrades both the giver and the recipient, although he remarks, "a different kind of charity *is* needed, and if the word *is* to be used, let us 'depolarise' it and make it once more to signify the spontaneous outflow of love in the heart of man for his fellow creature."

The widespread suspicion of insincerity which in the popular mind attaches to the organised churches is again referred to.

"The masses," says Mudie Smith, "subconsciously believe that a large stipend is not in harmony with the teaching and example of Jesus Christ." The minister "must have a large heart, and, if he is to be believed in by the people, a small salary."

"People are weary," says Mr. Warren, "of the monotony of singing doggerel rhymes and saying perfunctory prayers. Most of all they feel unmoved by the travesty of the Gospel perpetually presented in some quarters."

It is the old story, conviction and all that testifies to its depth and its reality, is the thing that tells.

But the most striking section of the report is that written on behalf of South London by C. F. G. Masterman.

He agrees in large measure with what I have already quoted, and in regard to public worship acknowledges that there is a search for something more "warm, human and inspiring."

He recognises on the one hand the indifference against which organised Christian effort seems to beat in vain; "the masses" (I quote his words) "to whom the spiritual

world has no meaning, and from whose lives the very fundamental bedrock effects of religion seem to have vanished."

On the other hand, with Charles Booth and the other writers, he recognises the failure of the churches, "whose faith," he says, "has grown cold and whose good news sounds far removed from anything approaching the passionate enthusiasm of other Christian centuries."

He epitomises the situation as he sees it in a miniature portrait of suburban life, which I will give you as he paints it.

Speaking of suburban religion, he says:—

"Much of it is the mere conventional homage to the accepted gods of the community. And even the section that is honest and deliberate is often partly lacking in certain essentials of an active and aggressive Christian endeavour. It upholds a decent life and a clean moral standard, with much individual personal piety. But it is far too content to limit its outlook to its own family or church, heedless of the great chaos of confusion and failure which lies at its very doors. It regards with disapproval and often with contempt, this world of poverty with its dumb demand for aid; it is generous in charity, but no appeal for justice in the name of the forgotten poor goes forth with united voice from the churches of South London. It is content to cultivate its own garden, to save its own soul; it is loth to identify its interests with those of its less successful neighbours. The challenge, 'Which think ye was neighbour to him that fell among thieves?' remains unaccepted. For this neglect of obvious Christian duty its loss is at least as great as the loss of those it declines to aid. It becomes more and more cut off from the great realities to which a real religion has always appealed. It draws a line tight round its own border, and endeavours to satisfy with missions and gifts of money the obligation of personal service and of a campaign for justice to all the desolate and oppressed. It has remained up till now unaffected by destructive criticism, and the changes of thought and outlook which have so ravaged the orthodox religions in other regions. But there are not wanting signs of the approach of the disturbance; it has still to pass

through a time of trial in which it will be tested to its foundations. Materialism, the lust for pleasure, the modern impatience with a definite creed, are slowly creeping into this vigorous suburban area; and the negative assertions of science and Biblical criticism are creating centres of local disquietude. If the prevailing type of religion largely withers before such forces as these, it will be because it has set itself apart in comfort, content with a personal creed of salvation; because it has felt no passionate impulse to assert a common fellowship with the less fortunate who are lying at its doors—no call to right the wrongs which, in the words of a great modern reformer, 'cry continually into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth.' "

Turning to specific remedies, Mr. Masterman, like the rest, criticises the form and method of the services. I will not however detain you with the details but will content myself with a quotation expressing his view of the average sermon:—

"I would not reiterate the demand for 'good preaching' which seems to me utterly to confuse the purposes of the services of the Church. We meet, not for edification, but for worship,—to confess our sins, to obtain spiritual succour, to renew the visible guarantee of fellowship. Eloquence will attract everywhere, in the pulpit as in the market-place. But the crowds that run after a popular preacher, that purchase his portraits and finger his clothes and pry into his family life and the contents of his larder, seem to me somewhat alien from the sincerest forms of religion. Yet there is no doubt we laymen have a right to appeal for better preaching; that the pulpit in many cases is not only not an attractive, but is actually a repellent, force. We have no right to demand eloquence, but we may demand sincerity, the frank facing of difficulty, freedom from the conventional machinery of the popular exposition of doctrine. The prevailing theology, even more perhaps than the prevailing liturgy, is wrapped up in an ancient language. The very terms are technical—grace, justification, conversion, perseverance. They flow out glibly from the student who has soaked himself in their historical meanings; they are Greek to the general

public. They were once realities for which men fought and gladly died; they still symbolise realities, the permanent elements of the life history of the soul; but they are wrapped around in cobwebs and the complications of a technical system;" and he concludes by appealing for "some message concerning the things of the spirit, delivered in simplicity and humility and sincerity to men who fain would be simple, humble and sincere."

This quotation brings me to the point which Mr. Masterman has rightly emphasised, and, with a concluding extract, will leave me free to develop my argument.

"The worship of machinery," says Masterman, "as Matthew Arnold continually asserted, is a national characteristic of Englishmen." Summing up what we have been discussing he says:—

"Each observer appears to hold that if that particular section of the machine in which he can detect a flaw could be repaired, or if a particularly up-to-date invention replaced some antiquated adjustment, the machinery of the Churches would once again grind out religious enthusiasm. With one it is the edifice; he deplores the cold Gothic building, repellent to the poor; he would substitute large lighted halls of the remarkable and dignified style characteristic of the later nineteenth century, with plenty of carpets, paint and colour. With another it is the edifices themselves; let the leaders of religion come into the street, he holds, and the problem is solved. With one again it is the service, antiquated, unintelligible to the vulgar; collect a band, he urges, sing the 'Holy City' and other moving modern melodies, weave into your prayers allusions to politics and incidents of the day. With another it is the sermon; the minister is too cold, or speaks with stammering tongue. Let us place a great preacher in every pulpit, and the masses will vehemently fight for entrance to our churches. Some advocate, some deprecate, the methods of the theatre; some would abolish pews altogether, and let the men stand; some see the inevitable advance of religion if pews are made more comfortable. Each one has convinced opinions as to what 'the

poor' will come to—the large hall, the small mission, the street corner. Few seem to care to face the question what we have to offer 'the poor' when they come."

I think that our examination of the two publications which have been under review will support my statement that the question "What is worship?" is not untimely. If we examine the facts we see that there is an actual decline in the attendance at public worship. If we compare the recent religious census in London with the census undertaken by the *British Weekly* in 1886 we find that while the population of London proper has increased by half a million in the last seventeen years, there has been a decrease of 150,000 in the attendances, the Church of England having fallen from 535,000 to 396,000, and the Nonconformists from 369,000 to 363,000. The quotations from the writers I have selected—all of them by investigation or actual service acquainted with the inner life of the metropolis and qualified to speak with authority,—point to the fact that the problem of public worship is recognised as unsolved. Ideas relating thereto are fluid, not fixed. There is a sense of impending change, of need and of baffled endeavour. A single fact will throw into vivid light the measure of indifference which it is sought to overcome. On one Sunday in a London district 122,000 persons out of 142,000 visited public-houses, and only 31,331 attended public worship. Even so great an effort as the United Free Church Mission of 1900 and 1901 practically failed to reach the outside world, and, like a stone cast into a stagnant pool, has left scarcely a ripple behind it. We may be prepared to admit that bright halls, chairs instead of pews, with other such details have their place, and even an important place, in the solution of the problem. The need for a warmer social atmosphere in our religious fellowship, for less formality and more sincerity of feeling and expression, is self-evident. One reads it in every

line of the census reports, and in the last addresses of this series I shall have more to say upon the social side of Christian responsibility.

But behind all these questions, legitimate as they are, and not to be neglected as mere practical details (for they may be the outward expression of a new and healthier spirit in our religious life), stands the great and fundamental question of the *message*. As compared with spiritual temper and outlook, adjustments and machinery count as nothing. This question of the message is the subject of these addresses, and we shall find ourselves face to face with it, when by way of preface we ask the personal question, "What is worship—what does worship mean to us?"

The man who contracts the week-end habit and goes down to a house-party in the country in his motor car to play bridge, or the man who goes to the nearest waste land or common on Sunday morning to do a bit of rabbit coursing, if he is not simply in revolt against a stupid and narrow conception of the Sabbath, is laying bare the emptiness of his soul, and, with a light-headed irresponsibility, playing pitch and toss with the immortal issues of life. Worship clearly has no meaning for him.

But what meaning has it to the man who on Sunday takes pains over his toilet, and, wearing the spotless credentials of respectability, repairs to church, chapel or meeting-house? Too often, alas, the performance is no more than a convention. And how oppressive the conventional formality of worship can be is soon discerned as we turn over the pages of any volume of ordinary sermons. The language is remote, the expression stilted and according to a set pattern which is regarded as "correct." Sir Edward Fry, in an essay on sermons, remarks, "the ordinary preacher is afraid to call a spade a spade; he would rather describe it as 'that instrument of agriculture with which

our first father laboured when, by the providence of God, he was called on to till the garden of Eden.' "

This indirectness, this evasion of straight issues, affects the whole atmosphere of devotion. The cry "mea culpa" seldom disturbs the smug complacency of the slumbering congregation. The silk hat is newly ironed, the best dress worn, and Sunday dinner, with coffee and forty winks on a chesterfield before a nice crackling fire, swim vaguely before the mental vision, and touch the proceedings with the mild pleasures of comfortable anticipation.

> "I'm willin' a man should go tollable strong
> Agin wrong in the abstract, fer thet kind o' wrong
> Is ollers unpop'lar and never gits pitied,
> Because it's a crime no one ever committed,
> But he mus'n't be hard on partickler sins,
> Coz, then he'll be kickin' the people's own shins."

And of course the people's own shins must never be kicked.

Even where this description is scarcely just, the sermon is too often a lecture, and illustrates in its want of spiritual inspiration, no less than its elaborate and exclusive appeal to the intellect, the detachment of preacher and hearer from the true idea of worship. A minister north of the Tweed, who prepared his sermons with all the ponderous patience of a German and with all the theological disputatiousness of a Scot, once lost the manuscript on which a week's labour and much midnight oil had been spent. Feverish search, till the last tolling of the summoning bell, proved unavailing. He had to face his congregation without it, and having explained the disaster, he concluded:—

"This morning, brethren, I must speak even as the Lord gives me utterance, but to-night, brethren, I hope to come better prepared."

I am afraid I cannot vouch that the story is true, but in

its implication it reflects, only too faithfully, a common attitude of mind. It is not under such conditions that the inwardness of worship is known. Where the simple freedom and the warmth of the family spirit are absent there will be nothing indeed of the wonderful spiritual intimacy of a Mme. Guyon and formalism will creep in apace. The want of homeliness in public worship is indeed a serious loss, for the conscious rectitude of fixed conventional worship has in it something of the properties of an iceberg, chilling the spiritual atmosphere, and clouding the deeper issues of life in its self-created fog.

But formal worship is already smitten with the doom of unreality. In these days men will not tolerate make-believe. No shibboleth will satisfy them, the interpretation of worship must be profound if it is to have lasting power. Hymns and sermons are a necessary element in social worship, but neither singing hymns nor listening to sermons will "save men out of their distresses, bring them out of the shadow of death," or "break the gates of brass and cut the bars of iron in sunder." The need is too deep for external palliatives. For a time, it is true, religion has been unfashionable, and there has been a notable tendency to look upon spiritual matters with indifference, to scoff at theology and philosophy, and to put an exclusive emphasis upon *practical* work. We have heard in this generation a great deal about environment. The slums with their tainted atmosphere, dingy courts and bad drains, the dull, unlovely streets, the drear monotony of smoke-grimed walls—and so forth. We have heard less than we did of the inward struggle between the soul and the spiritual paralysis of sin, the tragic witness of the Cross, the passion of the Divine redemption. No doubt the reason is simple. We have been witnessing a reaction from the other worldliness of a religious profession which took little count of the terrible evils of

social life. What was once a matter of course is now intolerable. An enlightened sympathy has quickened the social conscience, and thought awakened by necessity has concentrated upon practical reforms. Garden cities, allotments, model cottages, the science of sanitation, physical culture, these are subjects of general interest and conversation. Nor can we complain of this development. It has not indeed gone far enough. The social condition of England is such that a hundred years hence men will look back upon it with wondering pity. Nay! where organised Christianity continues indifferent or blind to the curse of poverty and the starved, unwholesome life to which thirty per cent. of our population is condemned, it is unfaithful to Jesus Christ and working in defiance of His spirit.

With this view everyone here is doubtless agreed. It is conceded that if earth is to blossom into heaven we must have healthy conditions of life, shorter hours of labour, a more equable distribution of wealth, the abolition of social disabilities. But external environment, important in its moral as in its physical consequences, is not the whole environment of man. There is an environment of the soul, an unseen but real influence, bearing upon character more intimately than do good or bad drains, and ill or well ventilated houses. In the swing of the reaction from an unreal religion, this less tangible environment has been neglected. Many have felt that reaction and have shared in measure the prevailing doubt as to the efficacy of direct spiritual communion.

But even in a Garden City death enters, and selfishness; sin and pain are known. God forbid that we should slacken for a day in social effort, but we are coming back to the deeper things of life. The mystery of being, the whence and the whither of man, the awful reaches of eternity, the unmeasured solitudes of space, the silent majesty of uni-

versal law, irrevocable cause and effect, the iron machinery of fate, the unequal distribution of pain, the sense of sin, the sickening despair of failure, the certainty of death, the apparent silence of God. Here is the stuff of theology and philosophy. Despised? Yes, for a time, but never for long. Unpractical? No, because the ground of all enduring work must be faith in the love of God.

This generation has rediscovered a truth which ought never to have been obscured—the truth that spiritual realities underlie the outward facts of life. The ordinary man is pondering it already. Sir Oliver Lodge, in the pages of the *Hibbert Journal*, tells us how the cultured layman is feeling his way, and Mr. Blatchford, under the pressure of this movement, re-hashes in the *Clarion* the rationalism of forty years ago.

Both are symptoms. While the Church Congress discusses the emptiness of the pews and the minority of Londoners who publicly worship God are counted, and Mr. Booth in several volumes marks the failure of the Churches, men are digging down again to the foundations of religion. They are burdened once more by that age-long need of the heart, the "Weltschmerz" of Goethe, the craving, the longing to know God, His character, His purpose, and His love.

What is worship? It is not a form but an exercise. The worshippers by proxy, who leave spiritual exercise to the minister and praise to the choir, have been named by Professor Drummond the "helpless, pampered parasites of the pew." Their beliefs are borrowed contentedly at second-hand, not won by the sweat of the brow. They know nothing of what Mr. Gladstone has called the *work* of worship, their soul has never fainted in them, they have never cried unto Jehovah in their trouble. The abandonment of the senses to æsthetic charm, the surrender of the intellect to claims veiled in all the glamour of a great historic

past, the yielding up of individual responsibility to the authority of a priest, are sore temptations which assail the weakness of the flesh.

Under every form and in every denomination there is true worship, but its truth is inward and intimate in the secret of the soul. The willing abasement of creaturely pride, the concentration of the whole energies of mind and heart upon the highest end of life, upon purity of thought and motive, upon self-forgetting love, upon Him who in Himself personified for us the Holiest instincts of Humanity—this is worship—the mingling of prayer and praise, of strife and victory, the hunger and thirst of those who wander in the wilderness, in a desert way, who have found no city of habitation, the praise of men who can thank Jehovah for His loving-kindness, for His wonderful works to the children of men, who have passed in His strength from victory to victory, from the regions of doubt into the sunshine of knowledge, from the loneliness of spiritual isolation to the joy of conscious union with the unseen Spirit of the universe.

In all the clamour of our modern life, with its feverish pleasures and hasty judgments, its fierce scramble of the markets, its dull *ennui* of endowed selfishness, its social aloofness and insincerities, nay! its lust and its cruelties, is there to be no place for the quiet and peace of God?

Stand apart at times from outward observance and the spoken word, and in the spirit of inward worship weigh your life, observe its trend, realise its purpose. Give your soul room to grow. Seek the reality which others have won before you and make it your own. The silence of the Quaker meetings means only this. It is no foolish freak of seventeenth century fanaticism, but a necessity of the soul's true life. It is not, it ought not to be, the perquisite of any one denomination. The soul must know itself and the battle of life must be fought within.

"For as the eye sinks inwards
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again
. . . and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean we say and what we would we know,
A man becomes aware of his life's flow,
And hears its widening murmur . . .
And then he thinks he knows
The hills where his life rose,
And the sea where it goes."

Character will be deepened and enriched, and all work, faith and life will be the stronger for such inward consciousness of God.

In the stately ceremonial of cathedral worship, in the simple service of a village tabernacle, there is room for the silent pause, for the earnest offering of individual and personal prayer. Formalism can only be dispelled as men recognise in public worship an expressed belief in the eternal values of life, and in its continuance beyond the limits of this physical existence. And reality will only return as, bound by the spirit of true fellowship, men unite in a common social endeavour (the supremest of which the soul is capable) to realise a sensible contact between the flesh-imprisoned spirit and the enveloping presence of Eternal Love.

"Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways!
Reclothe us in our rightful minds,
In purer lives Thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.

"In simple trust like theirs who heard
Beside the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word,
Rise up, and follow thee.

"O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with thee
The silence of eternity,
Interpreted by love!

"With that deep hush subduing all
Our words and works, that drown
The tender whisper of Thy call,
As noiseless let Thy blessing fall
As fell Thy manna down.

"Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.

"Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm"!*

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* Whittier.

MAN'S RELATION TO GOD.

II.—MAY WE BELIEVE IN GOD?

Scripture portion—Psalm vii. *or* John xv. 1-11.

THOSE who have been fortunate enough to escape from the town into the country during these beautiful days of the waning year, have found nature in a kindly mood. Autumn, spirit though she be of gentle melancholy, has kept her court in regal fashion, decorating the woods with glowing colour, touching the leaves with "fiery finger tips" to scarlet and gold, and diffusing the slant rays of the setting sun through a delicate veil of mist upon the moorland heights, till they seemed as the glory of a haloed saint. Often it has been possible in the loneliness of the hills, with the fragrance of the damp woods in our nostrils, and the clinging silence of nature, to feel with Wordsworth:—

> "that serene and blessèd mood,
> In which the affections gently lead us on,—
> Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul:
> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things,"

and with the poet learn to evade

> . . . "the fretful stir
> Unprofitable, and the fever of the world."

As the light fades in the evening sky, outward and inner vision are enticed from distance to distance of faint

colour, up from "the russet lawns and fallows grey" into the illimitable void of space. Now twilight has in her "sober livery all things clad." The ecstasy of colour is past. Gathering gloom blots out the familiar details, the church tower seen through the trees, the farm nestling under the distant hill, the glint of water in the stream, the far roadway, all the marks of human fellowship, the home surroundings of the earthly life, fade in the blackness of night, and the sky is stretched above us, a great dome pierced with a thousand twinkling points of light. Man and all his business of courts and parliaments, markets and finance, his pains and pleasures, shrinks into infinitely little compass. The mind ranges free along pathless ways among the stars.

And yet in this joy of colour, this mood so exalted, so aloof, this severance of human ties, is it all peace?

There is so much beauty in a starlit sky; the moon, subject of endless verse,

> "Oft, as if her head she bowed,
> Stooping through a fleecy cloud,"

the planets with their steady beam, the glittering dust of the Milky Way,—that we might well forget everything save the pageant spread before us, did not other thoughts intrude. The emptiness of intervening space, the dizzy gulf that separates star from star, the unthinkable, interminable, appalling vastness of a universe without a limit. The terror of the giant forces let loose in the flaming gases of those wheeling suns, their fierce unswerving onrush, second after second, year after year, century after century, millenium after millenium; the mystery of the dead worlds, heaven's spent fireworks, hung barren and frozen to swing monotonously through their inexorable circles.

As the solemn realities of eternity, the impotence of

human power, the poverty of human knowledge, are unfolded to our searching quest, the peace of the starlit sky is broken. We hear the clang and roar of the machinery of the universe; a wind from desert places, cold and inhospitable, shrivels the soul. We feel suddenly the unutterable loneliness which, in hours of self-realisation, gathers round the faltering faith of man. What is he that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that Thou visitest him?

Is it true that Thou crownest him with glory and honour? Thou who hast set Thy glory upon the heavens, the work of Thy fingers?

And is there behind this pageant, in the earthquake, wind and fire, is there, can there be one who cares, one to whom I can pray, one I may call my Father?

That is the question we have before us to-night, the question involved in the title "May we believe in God?" —the question which the unflinching self-examination of the soul, earnestly intent upon the realities of worship, must put and answer.

Last Sunday we discussed two questions:—Why men neglect social worship? and what social worship really is? We noted the frequent formalism of public worship, the widespread indifference to spiritual life, the evidence of neglect as shown in the statistics of attendance, the growing concern of the churches, their varied efforts to attract, the increasing fluidity of the forms of worship the evident need for a simpler type of church fellowship and of congregational worship, which shall give greater place to social needs and secure greater freedom and range of individual expression in the exercise of worship; and finally we defined worship as the recognition of a life outside ourselves as a labour of the spirit, a concentration of mind and heart upon the supreme end, the establishing of a living contact between the

individual soul and the spiritual force or forces of the Universe. Worship must be something more than the conventional homage paid to an idol personifying our national pride, self-righteousness and self-esteem; an idol which is made to throw its protection over law and order under the mask of religion, and to recognise as inviolable under that name all rights of property and dignities of rank and place, while slow to recognise social justice or to cherish humility, mercy and peace.

It is only in the inwardness of true spiritual worship that the soul grows aware of its deepest need, becomes impatient of self-deception and of the world's poor baubles, and seeks with passionate longing to know the real basis and meaning of life.

Here in the crowded congregation, as alone in the temple of nature, man is driven to face the naked facts of experience, and to ask the question already stated, "Is there a God whom I may worship, and if there be, how may I find Him?"

"Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" So enquired Zophar the Naamathite of Job, and such is the interrogation of the modern mind, baffled and confused in the conflict of life, and by the ever growing problems of existence.

How shall we set about to answer? Few of us probably are trained in philosophical thinking, the technical language of abstract thought is difficult to us, for the average Englishman is practical rather than speculative. A learned logical argument is probably beyond our reach, certainly beyond mine, and in any case could not possibly be conducted to a satisfactory issue in one hour. Must we then abandon the search? I think not. There is fortunately a path of approach wherein the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err. The way to God lies not solely nor even primarily through intellectual processes of reasoning, but through the

heart. There are, in short, two modes of attack, the intellectual and the spiritual. And while I do not say that intellectual processes have no place or validity, I believe the second alternative is at once the most hopeful and helpful for this or for any company of men.

I believe this to be inevitable, because we are compelled by the conditions of our nature, to think of God in the terms of human relationship. We can talk as we like of the "absolute," and the "infinite." These terms are convenient and stand for certain philosophical ideas. But at best they are terms used to express supposed realities which the human mind cannot possibly grasp or comprehend. They are as counters in the game of logic, the letter X in our algebraic equation, they cannot be palpitating realities to us as men. It is a great fallacy to suppose that you can argue a man into the knowledge of God; supply him, that is, with intellectual proofs of His existence and character, altogether apart from the question of spiritual state or receptivity. That there are mental difficulties, difficulties of the reason, which check or bar spiritual progress is, of course, sadly true. They have to be removed if peace is to be won, and intellectual arguments may and do have a persuasive or suggestive influence. Only I do not see that by themselves they can be exhaustive or complete. A dear friend of mine, a professor of philosophy, has just published a book which he has called "Social Law in the Spiritual World," and which he sent me during the preparation of this address. In establishing the lines of his argument he takes much the same position and rejects one after another the stock arguments for the proofs by logic. I shall sin in good company if I follow his example.

Take the causality argument. By itself it leads nowhere. It proceeds in this fashion. Here is some object, let us say Burns' "wee, modest crimson-tippit flower." It must have

had a cause. You press the enquiry back and back, effect, cause, effect, cause, effect, cause—but where do you stop? At God! Then who caused God? No! There is no finality —no helpful issue here. It contains a truth, but not the final truth.

Take the argument from design. Now I am quoting the philosopher:—

"The argument from design to a *personal* God does not convince anyone who is not *already* convinced."

"The most that can be *proved* from design," he adds, "is the fact that a man is a being who finds designs and ends and purpose everywhere in his world."

In other words, although the argument from design contains a great and suggestive truth, by itself it is not adequate for our purpose. Let us attempt a brief excursion into this field of argument and see how much we can gather from it. You know the famous watch theory; an intelligent savage picks up a watch upon the beach. It is evident to him that it is the work of an inventive and constructive mind, a higher intelligence (whom he will probably worship as a god), and this view is strengthened by the discovery that the little wheels one within the other co-operate to measure time, have in short a definite end which they serve. The facts of nature, we say, are like this watch and lead us to make the inference of a controlling mind. But here science interposes difficulties. She develops the theory of the struggle for the survival of the fittest. There is constant adaptation to changing conditions and necessities.

The ends served by nature, says science, are not ultimate, visible, definite and fixed, like the ends served by the watch. Moreover they are those of the creatures that seek them, not those of God. Darwin saw conditions develop necessities, necessities develop ends, and ends develop the power to seek them, and he could not see that in this there was any need

of creative invention or of creative purpose. A man falls lame through an accident, and cuts a walking stick with his knife to help himself along, but the stick is the design of the man, not of God. Such difficulties, though often pressed and sometimes confusing, do not in any reality touch the central truth. The power and freedom of adaptation remains, and is no argument against an ultimate purpose, an original initiative, a working and controlling mind. As a matter of fact, man *does* find *coherence* in the universe. He is able to classify the forces and facts, to rely upon their certain action and character under recognised conditions and in recognised modes.

Whether the universe has existed always or whether it has been created in six days, whether it is real or a subjective illusion, we do not escape the necessity for a cause, and since the universe, whether it be an illusion or not, is intelligible to the individual and to the corporate human consciousness, since the structure and action of our minds correspond to the structure and method of things around us, it is neither absurd nor illogical for us to argue from the facts to a mind outside our own.

But where does all this lead to? Such argument may be of service in meeting the stupid dogmatism of those who assert, in the fulness of their omniscience, that there is no first cause, no creative mind, no God. It is certainly useful in assisting to clear away the mental barriers which obstruct the earnest soul in his search after the ultimate cause, but it fails hopelessly to realise for the seeker that which he most longs to know, the character and purpose of an ultimate cause in its personal relation to himself. To quote my friend again, "the God and Father of Jesus Christ is the God whom we, in our modest quest, want to know, and not another."

That I believe, whether we are all willing to confess it

or not, is the truth. It is God, as we see Him in Christ, who satisfies the longings of the human heart, God the loving Father, whose passionate tender care for the least and most insignificant makes the burden of life supportable—brings faith and hope to man.

Let us then abandon the intellectual argument, that is to say the argument *in vacuo*, and endeavour to follow out what we may call the spiritual line of approach, keeping close to the facts of experience and of history as we do so. A certain view of God has come to us through Jesus of Nazareth. Let us take this view as our assumption or hypothesis, and test it. We shall only be adopting the methods of science if we do so. Given a fact, the scientist frames his interpreting hypothesis, and sets to work to subject it to the test of an experiment. He makes indeed an experimental venture of faith. That is a sound method. Neither in science nor religion can we arrive at truth unless we experiment. In both, the construction of unverified theories is a barren task. The man who asserts that he will believe only what he understands, forgetting the wholesome teaching of the old adage, "Nothing venture, nothing win," is in great danger of turning into an intellectual fossil.

We must at the outset arm ourselves with a definition. The word "God" is used in so many different senses that we must be particular in this. We are not concerned for instance with the national God, who fights the battles of England or Germany or Russia, as if he were the chieftain of a tribe; we are concerned with the God of Jesus, who is yet very imperfectly known and understood in Christian Europe.

And the matter is important because our idea of God means really our idea of life. You cannot separate them. The two are inevitably and organically related. You hate or despise the foreigner. You make a proud boast of your

national strength. You straddle across the seas and dare others to compete with you, and at once the Universal Father shrinks to the God of one nation, or the conception becomes so pagan that He is spoken of as the God of Battles, and all the grace of Christian humility, and all the moral grandeur of Christian meekness, are swallowed up in the vapourings of an ignoble pride.

Belief in God, and the character and terms of our belief, are of practical individual, nay, of international importance. We set out therefore with the Christian definition of God: a definition drawn from the material of the Gospels; I give it you as stated by Professor Clarke in his "Outlines of Christian Theology."

"*God is the Personal Spirit, perfectly good, who in holy love, creates, sustains and orders all.*"

Can we test that?

To begin with, if God is thus described, perfectly good, the Creator of all, how comes it that so many doubt His existence? Would not His reality be self-evident, all pervading, all controlling? Yes, it would if man's spiritual consciousness were developed to the necessary degree of spiritual sensitiveness. But man sees very dimly. Mr. Blatchford, for example, is cocksure that there is no God, and demolishes Him in two hundred pages of journalese. With Job, we can only answer him, "No doubt ye are the people and wisdom shall die with you," though we shall be inclined to extend the quotation and add in the words of the patriarch, "But I have understanding as well as you!" The fact is that the conception of a good God is too far-reaching for our immediate comprehension. To quote Professor Clarke:—"The reality of such a being can be firmly established only by concurrent reasons coming from various realms of existence and approved by various powers of the human spirit." Proof by intellectual argument is

one thing—the growing knowledge of active experience is another.

Introduce a primitive savage to Lord Kelvin. How long would it be before they conversed upon equal terms? To the savage, Lord Kelvin would simply be a physical animal of the same species, inferior probably in brawn and muscle to himself. His powers of intellect would be simply non-existent so far as the savage was concerned. Perhaps Lord Kelvin might perform a chemical experiment before him, give him, so to speak, a sign from heaven with an explosion and a flash, something like Mount Pelèe on a small scale, and then the savage would probably beat the ground with his forehead and grovel, not because he understood, but in fear and dread of that which he did *not* understand. Assuming for the moment that the savage was capable of such tuition in the space of a lifetime, he would need to be taught step by step what Lord Kelvin knew, to have Lord Kelvin interpreted for him, so to speak, and then he would see, not merely a physical being like himself, but a commanding intellect. Nay, more than that, he would find that in understanding Lord Kelvin he himself had ceased to be the mere cunning brute of the wilderness, and the whole of life would have a different aspect. Instead of the fish in the river and the nuts on the trees and the sheltering cave at night, his mental horizon would embrace civilisation. Literature, art, science, culture, the subtle relationship of intellectual and refined society, all these would have been swept in upon his consciousness. It was all there before, but the savage did not know. He could not see. He had to learn.

So it is with man and God. Man needs to learn. God needs to be interpreted. To see Him and know Him we must grow into His image.

Or let me put it in another way. In his book, already

quoted, "Social Law in the Spiritual World," Professor Rufus Jones says:—

"The revelation of God is like the revelation of music. Music is revealed, can be revealed, only through a musician. It comes to be reality, to be influencing power, a subduing and controlling force, only as an appreciative mind seizes and expresses the meaning and value of harmony. To the musician himself the world of harmony which he blindly felt at first as he laboriously toiled to master his instrument has now really become a reality not a whit less real than are the scenery and circumstance of his life of sense."

And having quoted this passage, I find Professor Jones so much in accordance with what I desire to say, that I shall quote him again:

"If," he says, "our search for God is to have a happy issue we must *first* resist the tendency to narrow knowledge. We must rather insist on raising it to the highest terms. We must include under the *knowledge process* our entire capacity for dealing with reality. Secondly, we must look for God where He *could be* found—not in the wide stellar spaces, not 'in eagle's wing or insect's eye,' not at the end of a logical syllogism. If He is to be found at all we must look for Him in the spiritual realm. We must go at once where spirit manifests itself. All attempts to find God apart from and dissevered from personal life have failed, and of course always will fail. He is surely not less personal than we are; He will at least be as genuinely spiritual as we mortals are!"

Here is a clear lead as to the methods we are to adopt in testing our definition.

The scientific man, working with laborious patience in his proper sphere, has an aversion for what he calls "subjectivity." The inward spiritual facts of life are no facts to him. You cannot put them in a crucible or examine them under a lens. Direct the telescope to Saturn and you see his rings, direct the microscope upon a leaf and you see

its cells. But the astronomer turning from his telescope exclaims, "I have swept the heavens and find no God!" What shall we think of the man who after adjusting and focussing his microscope, rises with the exclamation, "I have examined the brain and find no trace of love"?

We should be reminded I think of Lord Kelvin and the savage. What is it we value most in life? Is it things as they are in the outward? Is it the bare objects of sense? that which we can weigh, measure, dissect? In the landscape is it not its indefinable aspect of beauty? in the human being is it not the subtle charm of character, the winsomeness of unselfish love, the radiant joy of a pure heart? If we think of it, outward facts are of moment to us only as the vehicles of an inward reality, and without that inward reality, to adopt Professor Jones' vigorous language, "a man would be as interesting as a sand dune, as unspiritual as an extinct volcano on the moon."

The answer to the scientist is this:—Judging by the sure test of cumulative experience, the facts of the spiritual life are as real and of deeper importance than the facts of the physical world. But these facts are personal.

Very well then, I shall be frankly "anthropomorphic," and that terrible anathema which the agnostic pronounces upon the orthodox with all the unction of an "abracadabra" shall for once be disregarded.

Our definition says, "God is *the* Personal Spirit," and as I study the history of Christian experience—the test of the definition—I find it *is* this personal aspect of God which has uplifted and sustained men in the stress of suffering and persecution, and given them peace and joy in the bitterness of bereavement or in the hour of death. Science dwells on the vastness of God—the endless reaches of space, the majesty of law. This is an aspect of the supreme power, but not that aspect towards which we turn as children

seeking help. We cannot follow Him through space. We are lost in the desolate void. No doubt to the pantheist who asserts the abstract essence as over against the personality, this thought appeals, but whatever be the truth of Pantheism,—and it doubtless expresses a truth,—we are bound to say, if we accept the Christian revelation, that God may be more than we can mean by personal, but he is not less. The thought of God's vastness crushes, whereas we need a conception of Him which shall give us confidence and courage. The evidence of experience is final, that help comes through another channel, by the way of a personal interpretation.

"God is the Personal Spirit, perfectly good, who in holy love creates, sustains and orders all." On whose witness do we say that? On the witness of Jesus Christ.

If we resist the tendency to narrow knowledge and insist on raising it to the highest terms, what are the highest terms in the range of human experience?

Again it is the witness of Jesus Christ. Now let us keep close to experience; what, as an historical fact, *is* that witness? First of all, if we are to interpret the gospels and the history of the church we are bound to say again that it is the witness of personality. The Gospel is the story of an incarnation, the Gospel is the assertion that in Jesus "God and man come together in a single individual life" —in short the Gospel *is* Jesus Christ.

I am not making a theological assertion of my own. I am not even confining myself to the evidence of the New Testament. I am trying to discover the spiritual and social dynamic of twenty centuries—and I find it not only in the teaching and death, in the life and the message, but in the *person* of Jesus.

History points to Him as the supreme interpreter of the divine music—of that "deep power of harmony" in which "we see into the life of things"—the interpreter of God.

Let me put it as it has come to me and to many more. As our human minds are constituted there can in the nature of the case be no revelation of God except in human terms, terms we can understand with human faculties. A God who is unrelated to man by human ties is a God who must remain for ever unknowable and remote. Very well then. Read in the history of the human race the story of man groping after God. Here and there he catches a gleam of the heavenly radiance, hears the "rustling of garments of the Lord." In Egypt, India, China, Persia, Greece, men have gathered something of the eternal truth. We find it scattered in their literature, their old books tell us what they saw. But the vision was imperfect. Truth flickered, flaming high in Socrates and Plato, sinking low in the Egyptian Priest. Hope and knowledge were uncertain. Pessimism lurked at the heart of the Hindoo philosophy, and Plato longed for a sure and certain raft—some Divine word upon which men might make perchance a safe harbour from life's stormy sea.

Into the twilight of the world steps the pure child of God. He was the dawn. With Him came daylight. The sun shone above the hills. What had been dim was clear. "I and the Father are one." The great gulf between man and God is bridged. The heavens like brass are pierced. God has spoken in human language. He has made Himself known as His human side. He has interpreted His own character and will in a life lived under human conditions, and has brought Himself within our human comprehension. In Nature there is mystery. The mystery of unequal suffering, of pain, sin, and the terror of death, of the cruel struggle for survival, the preying of the strong upon the weak, of "nature red in tooth and claw." But through the dark veil which hid God from man comes a crowned figure with this speech upon His lips: "Lo, I am with you alway,

even to the end of the world." To the slave of doubt and fear He gives His hand. Life has had no meaning, no adequate ideal or purpose. "Take up thy cross and follow me." Certain facts of nature have seemed to you to fight strongly against a belief in the love of God. "Come unto me and I will give you rest."

What is there inherently impossible in this movement of God towards man? Apart altogether from historical evidence, the gathering witness of experience, the continued and growing vitality of the Christian view of life, which have somehow or other to be accounted for, why may we not freely accept the claim of Christ to be the revealer of the Father and render Him gladly the homage of intellect and heart?

We are assuming the truth of the Christian view of God, God a loving, holy, personal spirit. But what does that involve? We forget sometimes that love is the most intense and active principle in the whole range of spiritual experience. The most loving personality we know is always the strongest in self-sacrifice, the richest in sympathy, the tenderest in charity, the one who enters most deeply into the lives of others. He is never self-centred, he is always reaching out, seeking to serve. This is our human experience. If we say God is love, can His love be less or other than ours? People sometimes talk loosely of their belief in love as an abstraction, as if an indefinable atmosphere of passive, impersonal good nature could pervade all things. But love cannot be either passive or impersonal. Its nature demands that it be both active and personal. Deprived of these attributes love ceases to exist. Love must have volition, initiative, direction, and love must have an object outside itself. If God is love He must seek man, He must wish to help him. He must be the sum of all the attributes which are swallowed up in the meaning of

love. If the structure and action of our minds correspond to the structure and method of things around us, if we find the universe, whether illusion or reality, coherent and intelligible, are we to draw an arbitrary line and say that there cannot be a personality outside of our own with which we are able to correspond? Upon what principles of logic, what evidence of experience, do we defend such a view? What for example will you make of the existence from a remote past of the instinct of prayer?

Experience is against us. Men have accepted the saying, "I and the Father are one," not on the mere authority of the Gospels, but because it has borne the test of time and satisfied their craving. Jesus, pure, holy and selfless, in the agony of Gethsemane, and on the cross, is the accepted witness to the suffering love of a personal Father, one who cares, who grieves over sin, and is wounded in His heart by every transgression. Men have felt the strong drawing of that passionate yearning which broke forth in the cry, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," and they have yielded their will to the higher and stronger will of one whom they have come to recognise as a saviour, finding in this surrender a peace that nothing could destroy. Remember this is not speculative theology, but a statement of experience, an experience, moreover, illustrated in the victory of countless souls over sin and death. We are but pseudo-scientific if we contemptuously brush aside such evidence as of no account in a serious analysis of the forces and realities of life.

I repeat that if the witness of Jesus means anything, it means that God is not unrelated and impersonal, but that He is in spiritual contact with men, intelligible like the universe to human consciousness, that His love is not intangible but real, and corresponds to human love; that His character is like our character but pure and perfect,

that He knows and understands us and that we can know and understand Him.

"By all that He requires of me," says Whittier, "I know what God Himself must be," and by the obligations of human love, by the witness of Jesus Christ, we may know and see that character of God upon His human side. In Jesus we hear the beating of the Father's heart, and touch the hidden spring of the Divine Passion.

This at least is the strongest and most hopeful faith in the world to-day. Whatever our own may be, we must recognise its wonderful attraction—its drawing power. Close the Gospels for ever, erase the name of Jesus from the literature and the memory of men, and a dark shadow falls upon the world. A view of God full of solace and comfort disappears and we are left to brood helpless once more over the mysteries of space and time. The divine music ceases, and we hear again the roar and clang of the machinery of the universe.

Is there not in this evidence, so imperfectly marshalled, an indication of the true line of advance? We may believe in God but it must be an affair of the heart. We must be willing to make the venture of faith, to learn the virtue of self-sacrifice, to take with Christ the form of a servant, and with Him to live within self-imposed limits for the sake of doing good Step by step as we approach Christ experimentally, see with His eyes of tender pity, feel with His heart the burden of the world, we shall be learning to know the Father.

For man such faith is an end worth striving after, for, in the language of Erskine, it will rescue him from the uncertainties of time, by giving him a secure standing place in the eternal purpose of God.

"O Lord and Master of us all!
Whate'er our name or sign,
We own Thy sway, we hear Thy call,
We test our lives by Thine.

"Thou judgest us; Thy purity
Doth all our lusts condemn;
The love that draws us nearer Thee
Is hot with wrath to them.

* * * * *

"To Thee our full humanity,
Its joys and pains, belong;
The wrong of man to man on Thee
Inflicts a deeper wrong.

* * * * *

"We faintly hear, we dimly see,
In differing phrase we pray;
But dim or clear, we own in Thee
The Light, the Truth, the Way!

"The homage that we render Thee
Is still our Father's own;
Nor jealous claim nor rivalry
Divides the Cross and Throne.

"To do Thy will is more than praise,
As words are less than deeds,
And simple trust can find Thy ways
We miss with chart of creeds.

"No pride of self Thy service hath,
No place for me and mine;
Our human strength is weakness, death
Our life, apart from Thine.

"Apart from Thee all gain is loss,
All labour vainly done;
The solemn shadow of Thy Cross
Is better than the sun.

"Alone, O love ineffable!
Thy saving name is given;
To turn aside from Thee is hell,
To walk with Thee is heaven!"*

* Whittier, "Our Master."

MAN'S RELATION TO GOD.

III.

WHAT HAS JESUS TO SAY TO THE INDIVIDUAL?

Scripture portion—2 Cor. v. 14–21.

Two weeks ago we discussed the question "May we believe in God?" In seeking an answer we took three points of view:—

1. The Intellectual.
2. The Scientific.
3. The Personal.

We rejected the first, not because we despise the intellect, or belittle its place in religious life. That would be a crowning folly in these days of sloppy and superficial thought, when men mistake spiced rhetoric for spiritual fervours, and the garnished paganism of the doctrine of force for Christian Gospel. Deep, serious thinking is a most desirable discipline for this hasty, pleasure-loving age, and as a condition of true progress is alike indispensable whether we are engaged in the spiritual or the social aspects of the religious problem.

We rejected what we have labelled the intellectual method of finding God because by itself the intellectual method, that is the method of proceeding by the processes of pure reason and logical sequence, is proved futile or inadequate in experience. A young American who had been sent to a theological college wrote after six weeks' residence to his father that he guessed he had learnt all there was to know about God—what was he to do next? He is an effective caricature of a type which finds its philosophy of life cheap and ready-made, of men who live not deeply but pleasantly,

so the wind but favour their sails, optimists in blinkers, whose motto is evasion, who shirk life's sterner facts, who never practise their spiritual sinews in the wrestling of faith, but draw down the blinds of a comfortable domesticity against the solemn realities of Eternal Truth.

For them doubtless anything is good enough, but the serious seeker cannot find God at the end of a chain of argument, because, on the one hand, God is something more than a philosophical product, the "Ergo" of the logician, and on the other, because the wounds of the broken-hearted, stricken with life's deepest sorrow, in the desolation of bereavement or heavy under the burden of sin, can find no comfort in the crackle of scholastic parchment.

We rejected what we have labelled the scientific method of finding God, not because we have any fear of science, not because we deprecate its vigorous search after scientific truth, its methods or its conclusions, when confined to their proper sphere. That would be to make the cardinal error of separating God from His world and of refusing to find Him in Nature. If we believe that the revelation of God is coherent and continuous, we must believe that there are no gaps without God in the Universe. We must welcome every new fact, whether from the hands of Darwin or Huxley, and whether or not it disturbs the comfort of those accustomed ideas of the cosmogony which too often we confound with faith.

But the "Nature" of Science is not and never can be the God of the human heart. Nor can science alone reveal Him to us. Nature as understood by science, and treated as the only revelation to the exclusion of the Christian conception of the Eternal Fatherhood, becomes, as Sabatier tells us in his "Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion," a "formidable screen erected between ourselves and God, destroying hope and quenching prayer."

Its enigmas are so terrible, its evidence of law so crushing, its fatalism as complete.

In this connection I quoted Professor Clarke:—"The reality of such a being," that is of a God to whom we can reach out in the need of our souls just as children reach out their little hands to their mother in the dark, "can be formally established only by concurrent reasons coming from various realms of existence and approved by various powers of the human spirit."

We do not indeed absolutely reject the intellectual and scientific when we turn to what I call the personal method of finding God; we reject them only as in themselves insufficient, and adopt the personal method, the method of the heart, because experience teaches that this is the method by which alone the others become valid.

I have described this method as *personal* because that description defines what are, in the nature of the case, the conditions of any real knowledge of Divine Truth. We are personal, finite beings. Our powers of apprehension are personal and finite. If God cannot interpret Himself in human language, the language of the personal and the finite, then He must remain forever unrevealed and unknowable to man. He may be there, but the point of contact is missing. There may, for example, be civilisation in Europe, but the savages in some undiscovered forest of South America, who live for the chase and whose blow-pipes are the only symbol of their superiority over the brutes, can know nothing of it. The means of knowledge, the points of contact are missing. They would need a visitor from Europe to teach them what the higher life of our civilisation might mean, and would only begin to understand him when he stooped to their intelligence and spoke in their tongue. Even as music demands an interpreter before it can flood the soul with its divine harmony, so God demands an interpreter

before the heart can recognise that which it forever seeks and craves to know and feel.

If the contemporary witness of men and women and the cumulative experience of twenty centuries are to count for evidence, it must be taken as an attested fact that we find the supreme personal contact with the invisible God in Jesus Christ. What is the significance of that contact? In other words, if this be true, and its truth, remember, must be tested by experience rather than by argument, "*What has Jesus to say to the Individual?*" If in Him the veil is pierced, the terror of death taken away, the meaning and purpose of life revealed, if in Him we may find the musician who plays on our heart-strings the melodies of God, the great interpreter, what is the burden of that music? What *is* the interpretation?

Now in answering this question we must be careful to avoid as far as we can the use of theological terms. They are not satisfying. There has been far too much scholasticism in our treatment of the person and work of Christ. The cry "Back to Christ," though it means many things, means also, if not primarily, this,—that men have grown weary of seeking spiritual food in doctrinal formulæ. They have lost the human touch of Jesus. Theology has proceeded so often apart from the actual experience of the soul, it has so often confounded Roman jurisprudence with spiritual law, and treated the subtle fabric of spiritual life as if it were capable of mathematical measurement, that it has lost sight of the terrible pressure of our need for human relationship with God.

Consider for a moment the significant cult of the Virgin. We may interest ourselves if we like with the mythological origins, and trace the worship of Mary to the adoration of the female principle in creation which under its various forms is to be found all over the world. But surely the

practical meaning of this phenomenon is this,—that the tender warmth and human attractiveness of the personality and teaching of Jesus have been destroyed or hidden by the cold, harsh and repellent theological interpretation which has been forced upon them. The human craving for Divine Love, barred from Jesus, has sought refuge in the mother heart of the Virgin, has carried over to her that conception of God which Jesus really gave. Nay, I will go further and state my belief that the fact of what we call "Unitarianism" may be attributed very largely to the same cause. Tender spirits more truly baptised than many who acknowledge the title of Christian in its accepted sense have been revolted by the "Jesus" of orthodoxy, and have been driven to find direct in God that thought of the Eternal Fatherhood to which Jesus in His life of perfect filial obedience first gave vitality and power.

To my mind both these positions have their peculiar dangers. The worship of the Virgin, resting as it does on no adequate historical basis, and in itself an unconscious compromise with truth, is liable to superstition, and the Unitarian view, so essentially Christian in spirit and often so beautiful in its expression, runs the terrible risk of becoming de-humanised in the absence of personal focus. The conscious acknowledgment of Jesus as a movement of God towards man, as the bearer of a saving revelation of Truth, seems to me of more than mere intellectual importance, for experience as a whole does, I think, sufficiently witness that the vision of the Fatherhood, when it comes to us through the medium of the suffering Christ, is imbued with a wonderful fulness of spiritual power, and is able to touch the springs of the heart's devotion as no other expression of Truth has ever done in the long story of the human race.

In saying this Christians do not pass moral judgment

upon those who differ from them. They have no right to do so. Too often in the practical witness of everyday life we have miserably limited and distorted the teaching and the witness of the Lord whom we would serve. During the last great struggle in South Africa few have been more faithful in their protest against the degrading passions of the war-spirit than the Unitarian, and when we remember some of the sentiments so loudly expressed by professing Christians, who, forgetting the sad figure in the garden of Gethsemane, hastened to espouse a Hebrew God of Battles, in their eagerness to justify their country, we may well be dumb.

There is indeed no sign of grace, despite the dark symptoms of prevailing materialism, more full of hope than the gathering determination to get behind the symbols of speech and the doctrines of the creeds, to the spiritual reality underlying them all. For long years it has seemed as if we were witnessing the steady attrition of faith subjected to the continual and effective bombardment of an informed and powerful criticism. But at last there are signs of change, signs of positive results arising out of what seemed a purely negative process. It is true that in the last hundred years more books have been written about Jesus than in any other century of the Christian era. The interest deepens. Whether we approach from the standpoint of the avowed agnostic or of the devout believer, we must feel as though the world were trembling on the brink of a great spiritual discovery, as if in these modern days we were about to receive a clearer vision of God, a great fresh unfolding of His Will and of His Divine Sympathy, which will touch the heart of modern culture even as the fervid gospel of Wesley and Whitefield reached the buried life of the down-trodden and outcast in eighteenth century England. There is hope that the fruit of what we call 'Modern Thought," which, by the way, is strangely old,

may be a richer life, a deeper unity, a melting of the hard lines of division between sect and sect, and that in the dissolution of stereotyped creeds we may find true brotherhood in a fuller interpretation of God's Fatherhood, and unite in a living fellowship under the sway of the Christ's compelling power. Creeds are milestones, doctrines are interpretations; Truth, as George Fox was continually asserting, is a seed with the power of growth, not a fixed crystal, be its facets never so beautiful.

We shall be right, then, if we keep as close as we can to experience as our guide, and answer the question "What has Jesus to say to the Individual?" in the simple, untaught speech of unprofessional laymen.

If a thoughtful person were reading the Gospels for the first time and were asked what he judged to be the dominant note of the message of Jesus, I think the answer would certainly be "The Fatherhood of God."

What do I mean by that? The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man are unfortunately stock platform phrases and find but a weak illustration in the practical ways of shrewd, self-seeking business life—the life of the majority.

I will put it this way:—Here is the world with its tangible facts. I study it and find law everywhere, in the minutest cranny of the remotest mountains, in the star-dust on the deep ocean floor, in the common daisy and the rarest hothouse bloom, in the smallest insect and in the elephant—it is all one. I cannot escape from it. I consider myself. I am one of millions, coming and going. I too am in the grip of law, no account is apparently taken of my personal desires except in so far as they subserve this common law. I know absolutely nothing of a previous existence, absolutely nothing at first hand of a future existence. I see just what I do see and no more. I am like a cyclist on a dark night:

the lamp of my reason and experience lights up just a very little of my road, but with this difference: I am not propelling my bicycle, and I cannot see what or who it is who controls the handle bars. I see no home lights in the gloaming shining for me, and yet however much I may long to dismount from my machine of life, however much I may dread my goal, I *must* go on; must, and the darkness is very great. For example, I love someone dearly, my whole life is wrapped up in that life, the life of my friend, in closest unity of heart and sentiment. Suddenly in a few days, in a few hours, an unforeseen disease develops. Death strikes with savage knife. That friend is taken from me. I hear nothing, I see nothing more of him. I do not know where he is gone. I am left alone. All the little things we did and planned together bring a sharp pain to the heart as I think of them. They can never be again. Never. The future is desolate, the present is filled with an intolerable ache of hopeless longing. I pray till my heart breaks, but

> "No answer from on high
> Breaks the crystal spheres of silence,
> And no white wings downward fly."

Again I reflect. This world is one of millions, perhaps the most powerful telescope can only reveal our neighbours, perhaps there are not only worlds beyond worlds, but systems of worlds beyond systems, without any end, perhaps they are all or mostly peopled and the hosts of individual souls are without number. Then who am I? Shall I not be cast as rubbish to the void? Can I, even I, count for anything in this vast scheme of things. In this ordered chaos of blind fate, can there be a meaning which will satisfy my hungry heart?

Suddenly I hear these words:—"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall upon the

ground without *your Father:* but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows. Everyone therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before *my Father* who is in heaven."

"*Your Father, my Father,* who is in heaven." Who said that? Jesus. Ah! but it may be a gloss, an interpolation, something borrowed from Hillel, who knows? How can I be sure that He said it. How can I *know* that it is true? Look abroad, what do you find? Others suffering like you and passing through a like experience into a holy peace. How can they be peaceful and patient when you are hopeless and sad? Question them. They will tell you that the love of Jesus Christ has comforted them, that in learning to know Him they have learnt to know God as a loving Father, that the presence of His love and the sense of His sympathy is so real and abiding that against the seeming cruelty of a bitter bereavement, there is no rebellion, but through it all a sense of sweet surrender to a Heavenly Will.

"I know not," (says one of these)
"where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air,
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

Climb the ladder of history. In every age you will find this human witness to the power of the revelation of Jesus, until you come step by step to Jesus Himself. In the biographies of saints, the sufferings of martyrs, the daily itinerary of wayfaring men, in the experience of cultured and ignorant, rich and poor, slave and free, the chain of evidence is unbroken. Why should you set it aside? It has its source in the dynamic personality of the suffering Christ. In the face of this broadening stream of influence

you are not compelled to found your belief on an isolated text. Moreover, the words quoted from Matthew are harmonious with the whole atmosphere of the Gospels, and whatever may be true of passages or fragments, no historical or literary criticism of real weight and insight will tolerate the supposition that they are altogether false. Read any able rationalist book, and there are none more able than J. M. Robertson's, and you will feel that while there may be much or little to modify in the historical details, the attempt to destroy the historicity of Jesus, or to deny Him His broad characteristics as we know them in the pages of the New Testament, lands us in the insuperable difficulty of explaining the Christian Church, and still more the living power of Christianity in progressive religious and social thought and life to-day. You cannot dig a huge hole in history and expect us to be satisfied if no attempt is made to fill it up. Yet in effect that is what the rationalist plea amounts to. All this evidence of trustful faith in the love of a Heavenly Father, even when victoriously submitted to the sternest tests of which life is capable, is to go for nothing. The fact that before Christ there is no similar force of comforting assurance is to be lightly regarded, and the profound gulf which separates the life and death of Socrates, beautiful and moving though it was, from the life and death of Jesus, is to have no significance. I think we may safely say that, be the exact historical truth about Jesus what it may, there came with Him into the life of men a unique revelation of the Fatherhood of God—of a Divine love and sympathy, tender, infinite in its scope caring individually for the countless millions of individual souls. True or false, this revelation has been of the deepest moment, it has profoundly influenced civilisation, and is directly or indirectly influencing it now. The pain of death and the mystery of life do, as a matter of tested experience, lose their

terrors for those who are able in the faith of God's Fatherhood, to fall back upon the strength of His everlasting arms. And as for the rationalists, I know nothing more wildly irrational than the chaos of universe where trustful love is a delusion and all the deepest instincts of the human heart have no correspondence with outward reality. Such a universe is unthinkable—a dreadful nightmare. From the loneliness of the noblest pagans, as of all those without a sense of God, oppressed with the weight of this weary world, the littleness of life and the uncertain hope of immortality, the Fatherhood of God has redeemed us.

But are we to stop here? Is this all that the revelation of Jesus implies? Does He simply draw aside the veil which hid the Father from us, or is there more? I think there is, and although it really flows from the revelation of the Fatherhood, we will treat it as a second and distinct consideration.

It is this, that in His message to the Individual, Jesus says *that Unity between Man and God is possible.*

Here again we are not dependent upon texts but have a "cloud of witnesses" who testify by their lives and writings that the veil between flesh and spirit is only thin to the eye of faith. Such men and women as St. Teresa and John Woolman, Mme. Guyon and George Fox, tell us in their different language the same story. They trusted the message of Jesus and they found, knew and possessed the love of God in their hearts. There can be no question that this possession was real, or if it *was* delusion then reality has no meaning. Delusive love does not radiate real warmth, and we have the witness of contemporaries to its magnetic and uplifting power.

But let us accept this and take our consideration under review,—that unity between man and God is possible.

There are two things that would make it impossible:—

First, the intellectual inability to see and know God, an inability removed by the revelation of the Fatherhood.

Second, the love of fleshly things, absorption in the lower or animal life, the deliberate choice of what, in the light of a higher revelation, we know to be evil,—in a word *sin*.

How is the second obstacle to be removed? What is the bearing of the teaching of the Fatherhood upon this terrible cause of separation?

Here we approach the central difficulties of the Christian position. It is in dealing with this aspect of the life of the soul that the use of theological terms, terms borrowed from the law courts, or from the old Jewish Rabbis, taken bodily from an ancient civilisation with its oriental modes of thought and expression, and set down, so to speak, without due adjustment or deduction, in our modern western life, has done untold mischief. There is nothing in the statement of Christian truth that is more generally unsatisfying than the doctrine of the Atonement. There is nothing that needs to be stated with more careful regard to the use of terms, or which needs more emphatically a reinterpretation in closer accord with the facts of the spiritual life. Unreality is so generally felt in this connection that the doctrine of the Atonement is gradually being left out of the pulpit *repertoire*, and unfortunately a good deal is going with it that ought to be retained. Let us endeavour to keep to the rules we have already laid down, and express in as simple language as may be, what is involved in the removal of sin as a barrier between man and God.

In making this statement I would urge three governing considerations:—

First, that we should test everything by Christ's con-

ception of the Fatherhood of God. Whatever is inconsistent with that view, as we gather it from the Gospel narratives, must be dismissed.

Secondly, that we keep steadily before us the conditions of Paul's education, his Rabbinical training, the atmosphere of Jewish tradition which formed his environment, and hold ourselves prepared to translate his language into modern terms which, while they express his inner meaning, discard his symbolism, much of which is not only offensive but unintelligible to the uninstructed Western mind.

Thirdly, that we put out of our thoughts all theological battle cries, and approach the question from the standpoint of men, conscious of shortcomings and sin, who long for a living and saving knowledge of Eternal Truth.

I leave the doctrinal and scripture proof texts which, by the by, are generally torn up violently by the roots from the soil in which they grew and thrown about as missiles, regardless of the controlling significance of the little word *context*,—and make my statement in the light on the one hand of Christ's teaching of God's Fatherhood, and on the other of man's spiritual need.

To take up the proof texts one by one would be to set the cart before the horse. We must first clearly grasp the root idea, and then we shall be at leisure to examine the proof texts as we please. This, I think, must be a private occupation, not only because time fails us, but because the public discussion of a series of isolated texts is the same thing as not seeing the wood for the trees.

In the first place, then, the revelation of the Fatherhood of God is unquestionably implied in the parable of the Prodigal Son. It is implied or directly stated elsewhere again and again, but nowhere is it suggested in such tender

and luminous form. God is represented as loving the sinner and forgiving him because of his repentance. There is no suggestion of any other condition—indeed the Elder Son is rebuked because he grumbles at what he regards as the excessive attention paid to his erring brother. This liitte touch seems designed expressly to emphasize the simplicity of the terms upon which the sinner gains or regains the Divine favour. Now let us translate this from the Eastern parable into the conditions of our own experience. You are a father. A son of yours breaks away and goes wrong He lives among dissolute companions, out of sight, out of touch with you and your ideas of life. You mourn in your heart for him. Your life is saddened by this great sorrow, for, of course, you love him notwithstanding. Something, some circumstance or some holy influence, no matter what, converts your son to your view of life. He bitterly regrets his wasted years. He returns and asks forgiveness in full and sincere repentance. What do you do? Do you hold him at arm's length and talk about satisfying your sense of justice? Do you say that in order to forgive, some one else must be punished on his behalf? Nothing of the kind All the pent-up love of years flows out at the instant as you clasp him to your breast. He might have had that love at any moment for the asking, upon the one condition of repentance, which indeed would be the condition of his desire. But has there been no punishment? Assuredly; there is never repentance without punishment. Repentance implies shame and bitter regret for what has been done wrongly, it implies the pain of acknowledged shortcoming, it implies the smart and rankle of an uneasy conscience and injured self-esteem. Repentance is the burning out of the old sin, the cauterising of the wounds of the soul; it is, it must be, a painful and an arduous process. And on the other side, you as a father have been

bearing the burden of your son's sin. It has been a heavy weight upon your heart. It has taken away the sunshine from your life. Your son has been crucifying you, and you have borne pain for his sake. More than that, you have prayed and agonised for him in the secret of your closet. You have suffered vicariously—suffered for him.

Now suppose it is true that God was really in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. Find me anything in the teaching and life of Jesus to suggest that the love and character of God are of a different stamp of goodness from that to which Jesus calls us. Does not the grand truth of His revelation lie rather in this, that in a unique Divine-Human Personality we find not a yawning gulf separating us hopelessly from God, but a point of living contact, a witness to the essential unity in character which binds man to God and God to man? "I show you the Father," He says, and "I and the Father are one. I stoop to speak your language, to tell you of a higher civilisation, a kingdom of heaven, and because I stoop to come within the reach of your intelligence, therefore the Father is greater than I, the creator is beyond your finite comprehension. But nevertheless in His essential character He is comprehensible. His love, His sympathy I show you here in my life and in its extreme issue upon the cross." There is nothing here, nothing whatever, to justify a departure from the teaching of that wonderful parable of the Prodigal Son. God loves and forgives just in the same spirit in which a good earthly father loves and forgives. Ah, but you say, this destroys the terror of the Lord. If it is possible to come to God whenever we like, you say in effect, "Sin just as long as you please, and then when you are tired of it, give it up and turn to God." This might be a valid objection were it not for the condition of repentance. Sin carries its own bitter punishment with it, lust breeds satiety and loathing, and

selfishness breeds a morose and sour spirit, joyless as a subterranean cavern. Hell is separation from God, and the longer we live in hell the harder it is to escape. Character congeals, as it grows it stiffens, and takes shape, ugly or beautiful according to our absence from God or His presence with us. There is indeed nothing weak or effeminate in the goodness of God as Jesus unfolds it. We speak of Jesus as the revealer, but remember that if He is the revealer of the Father, He is also the revealer of the sin that separates Him from His children. Let me quote Sabatier again:—

"So far from blunting the edge of the moral law, He sharpens it as one sharpens a dissecting knife in order the better to pierce the living flesh and penetrate to the very joints and marrows; He infinitely answers the demands of the traditional ideal; from the outward act He descends to the inward feeling; He makes lust equal to adultery, and anger or hatred to murder itself. He tells His disciples to love their enemies, to pray for those who persecute them, to answer violence by gentleness, and injuries by love. He speaks thus not to weaken the vigour of righteousness, but sees in love and gentleness a higher righteousness, and the sole means of securing the final triumph of good over evil. That is why the righteousness of His friends exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. It is no longer dictated by an outward letter, but it has, for soul, the very spirit of the Father, and, for inward rule, the ideal the Master has lit up in the conscience: 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.' "

Yet more, Jesus is not only the revealer of the Fatherhood or of sin, He is the revealer of the agony of God's heart under the burden of the sin of the world—that agony which a good earthly father feels for a lost and erring child. God knows the possibilities of the higher civilisation of the Kingdom of Heaven, and by this He measures earth's failures. He sees under every roof, into every heart; every drunken orgie, every scene of lust and crime, every secret

thought, pure or foul, every motive, lofty or selfish, are naked in His sight. Think how sin, seen in all its horrid ugliness, must wound His purity, how His love, active, outreaching, passionate, must yearn to save, to uplift and to redeem! Here the witness of the cross has its supreme mission. But what does the cross mean? It is alas, no uncommon stumbling block that theology takes symbolism, an expressive or suggestive phrase, literally, and works out its blundering thesis upon false assumptions. We talk, for example, of Jesus as the Son. Certainly He was the Son in His relation of filial perfect obedience to the Father, a relation in which He is for us the Way, the Truth and the Life, but I think we miss the deep significance of the Cross, if we set Jesus in antithesis to God and press the symbolism of the son too far. "I and the Father are one." That means to me that I think of God in terms of Jesus Christ, that I pray to Jesus as representing the Father to my consciousness, or to the Father as I see Him in Jesus. Carry that thought to Calvary itself. See in the Crucifixion not merely a martyr's death, not merely a passing gleam of God's love, certainly not a sacrifice to God carrying a legal significance, but in truth the flashing into light of an eternal fact, the nature of God's relation to sin, of the pain we inflict on His heart by our own wrongdoing. Here is the wonderful dynamic of the Cross. God calls you to Him. He shows you His suffering, He shows you the hatefulness of the sin that caused it, and in showing you His love, shows you the punishment of alienation from Him, the hell of the unrepentant, in which we must remain until repentance opens the gate for the prodigal and gives entrance for the free forgiveness and love of the Father's house. In Jesus, in His life, and His death upon the cross, we are shown the nature of God, and the possibilities that are within our reach. We are shown the world as the Father sees it, are called to live in harmony with His will and purpose, to hate the sins

that made Him mourn, to scale the barrier of sin and discover that the way of penitence lies open and direct to the Fatherly heart. No legal bargain, but a spiritual conflict, an inward change, the rejection of the living death of sin, the choice of the new birth, of the purified self, the conversion from a low and earthly to a high and spiritual standard of life and conduct,—here you have the practical conditions of salvation, and in the active, free and holy love of God, ever seeking entrance, ever powerful if we but yield the gateway of our heart, is the substance of the Gospel. The revelation of God's Fatherhood and the possibility of unity with Him through Christ, meet the deep need of the soul for a centre of repose apart from the transitory interests and the things of time. Hear, then, the gentle appeal "Come unto me and rest."

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear;
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole,
And calms the troubled breast;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary rest.

"Dear Name, the Rock on which I build,
My shield and hiding-place,
My never-failing treasury, filled
With boundless stores of grace.

"Jesus, my Shepherd, Saviour, Friend,
My Prophet, Priest and King,
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
Accept the praise I bring.

"I would Thy boundless love proclaim
With very fleeting breath;
So shall the music of Thy Name
Refresh my soul in death."

MAN'S RELATION TO GOD.

IV.—WHAT HAS JESUS TO SAY TO THE STATE?

Scripture portion—Galatians v. 13–25.

MANDELL CREIGHTON, late Bishop of London, in a most interesting letter to an old friend of his, writes as follows upon the subject-matter of faith—I quote fragmentarily:—

"Pure reason leads nowhere. It is not a beginning. We act from the heart first, then the head explains. . . . Love is the motive power. Life is only explicable as part of a general purpose, and our life is the development of our personality. . . . This thought explains and justifies the nature of the revelation of God in Christ. God could be known in nature, in conscience, in history, but if He was to be thoroughly known, He must be known in a person. So Christ stands, the central fount of personality, who explains not my gifts, my attainments, my knowledge, my capacities but *me*, that which lies beyond these, uses them, and gives them meaning and coherence. So He stands, the sustainer of all men, and I am led to Him by all my experience. . . . Relationships, founded on a sense of lasting affection, are the sole realities of life. . , . Faith is personal trust in a person."

I read this letter after preparing my last paper, "What has Jesus to say to the Individual?" and the sentences I quote from it seem to me both to sum up our argument so far as we have conducted it, and to introduce us to the question we have now to discuss,—"What has Jesus to say to the State?"

If God has revealed His character in a personality and if that personality is Jesus Christ, then we are able to start from the knowledge of God's Fatherhood, we are able to interpret that fatherhood as involving active personal love

for individual souls, freely and continually given, and to recognise in repentance the means by which we can convert the knowledge of the Divine Love into a realised fact, consciously accepting it as the propelling and guiding force in our lives. We have recognised that the great barrier to a living knowledge of God is not so much the mystery of being, with its vision of the bottomless chasms of space and the endless reaches of eternity, not so much difficulties of intellectual apprehension, as it is the terrible fact of sin, the conscious choice of selfish views of life, of mean and unworthy ends which effectually prohibit that true companionship with God which is the "saint's everlasting rest." Unity with God implies unity with Him in thought and action, what Paul meant by the mystic phrase, "being hid with Christ in God." To achieve this we have to burn out our old sins, to cauterise the wounds of the soul, to give our desire for holiness, and God's desire for us, free play in our hearts. We have to effect a dynamic union of that which is best in us with that which we know through Christ to be in the Father.

Out of such a union there spring certain consequences, both for the individual and for the state, consequences which are summed up in the word brotherhood, fruits which have been catalogued by an Apostolic writer as "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control."

Unfortunately the brotherhood of man is now a glib platitude, commonly accepted side by side with a view of life which is largely at variance with the essential spirit of brotherhood as expressed in Jesus.

We cannot, however, rest satisfied with mere pious patter, and we must ask ourselves what brotherhood ought to mean in recognised facts of experience, when taken as the corollary of God's declared Fatherhood.

In the first place, then, the teaching of Jesus, whether to the individual or to the state, is the teaching of social love. Love cannot be self-contained. The Gospels tell us this again and again in parables like that of the Good Samaritan, and in more direct teaching: "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second *like unto it* is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy, but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you, that ye may be the sons of your Father who is in heaven."

These are familiar not to say hackneyed quotations, continually repeated if too seldom put in practice, and sufficiently illustrate the justice of Mandell Creighton's deduction:—"Relationships founded on a sense of lasting affection are the sole realities of life."

The revelation of Jesus is indeed a revelation of relationships, relationship with God, its character and possibility, and relationship with man. God is social, man is social, because God is Love, and because love expresses itself through personal relationships.

Dr. Rufus Jones, in his "Social Law in the Spiritual World," writes:—

"The older views of God regarded Him as being in another world, of totally other nature from our own and as being so absolute in Himself as to need nothing from us. These views did not fit our New Testament, but had been formed on the basis of a now dead philosophy and had become fixed and traditional. The doctrine of the conjunct and social nature of personality has made them impossible views for those who think. We realise now that our views of God must be grounded in the eternal nature of things, and conform to

the inherent facts of personal life, and that means that this, the conjunct, or spiritual 'group' characteristic, must run up to the highest scale of life, that even God finds His life and joy by going out of Himself and bringing other lives to Himself."

This view agrees at least with that prayer uttered under the olive trees at night by the Son of Man in agony, "And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one."

And if we marvel how John could possibly have set down such a prayer in writing, it is at least organic with the whole life and teaching of the Master whom he portrayed with such rare intuition and sympathy. It is the teaching of the parable of the Vine and the branches, the thought of the kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Professor Everett has put the case for us in a modern version of the old imagery, found in his "Immortality and other Essays."

"We ask the leaf, 'Are you complete in yourself?' and the leaf answers, 'No, my life is in the branches.' We ask the branch, and the branch answers, 'No, my life is in the trunk.' We ask the trunk, and it answers, 'No, my life is in the root.' We ask the root, and it answers, 'No, my life is in the trunk and the branches and the leaves. Keep the branches stripped of leaves and I shall die.' So it is with the great tree of being. Nothing is completely or merely individual."

No! nothing is merely individual. The supreme question of religion is personal salvation, the personal struggle to overcome evil and escape from the prison of selfishness into the freedom of sonship, but it is not individual. If we seek our lives we lose them. One of the most beautiful souls ever lit by the love of Christ was John Woolman, a poor unlearned working man of New Jersey, the friend of the slave and the apostle of the simple life.

Upon one occasion he lay sick upon his bed of illness. Hear what he says in that journal which Channing called "the sweetest autobiography in the language," and which Charles Lamb tells us to get by heart. Lying as it were in a trance he forgot his own name,—I quote his words:—

"Being then desirous to know who I was, I saw a mass of matter of a dull gloomy colour, between the south and the east; and was informed that this mass was human beings in as great misery as they could be and live, and that I was mixed with them, and that henceforth I might not consider myself as a distinct or separate being. In this state I remained several hours. I then heard a soft melodious voice, more pure and harmonious than any I had heard with my ears before; I believe it was the voice of an angel, who spake to the other angels; the words were—'John Woolman is dead.' I soon remembered that I was John Woolman, and being assured that I was alive in the body, I greatly wondered what that heavenly voice could mean. I believed beyond doubting that it was the voice of an holy angel, but as yet it was a mystery to me.

"I was then carried in spirit to the mines, where poor oppressed people were digging rich treasures for those called Christians; and heard them blaspheme the name of Christ; at which I was grieved; for His name to me was precious. I was then informed that these heathen were told that those who oppressed them were the followers of Christ; and they said among themselves, 'If Christ directed them to use us in this sort, then Christ is a cruel tyrant.'

"All this time the song of the angel remained a mystery; and in the morning my dear wife and some others coming to my bedside, I asked them if they knew who I was; and they telling me I was John Woolman, thought I was light-headed; for I told them not what the angel said, nor was I disposed to talk much to anyone, but was very desirous to get so deep that I might understand this mystery. . . .

"As I lay still for a time, I at length felt Divine power prepare my mouth that I could speak; and I then said, 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the

flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.' Then the mystery was opened, and I perceived there was joy in heaven over a sinner who had repented, and that the language 'John Woolman is dead,' meant no more than the death of my own will."

Here is the practical meaning of the teaching of Jesus, the flowering of Christian character in the fragrance of its proper bloom. It is the justification of the social gospel which men are preaching to-day. And the Gospel *must* be social. What we understand by Evangelicalism—that is the Gospel expressed in the prevailing theology of fifty years ago, under the formula of the plan of salvation, was strong in its personal note, but its urgent plea to escape the wrath to come weakened at once the thought of God's Fatherhood and its effective bearing on the oneness of humanity.

It almost became at times a "sauve qui peut," a hurried retreat, without thought of fallen comrades, from the devastating range of the enemies' guns. I shrink even from an unintentional travesty of a movement which has worked miracles of redemption amongst the lost and degraded of our kind, miracles performed by men who felt that they must work as firemen work to save the helpless from the flames of a burning building. Yet this quotation from a notable sermon on the "Resurrection of the Dead" has its significance. I take it from an article in the *Independent Review*.

"When thou diest thy soul will be tormented alone; that will be a hell for it; but at the Day of Judgment thy body will join thy soul, and then thou wilt have twin hells, thy soul sweating drops of blood and thy body suffering with agony. In fire exactly like that we have on earth thy body will be asbestos-like, for ever unconsumed, all thy veins roads for the feet of pain to travel on, every nerve a string on which the devil shall forever play his diabolical tune of hell's unutterable lament."

Read that with the parable of the prodigal son! The thing is impossible. In the baleful gleam of those *post-mortem* terrors it is not difficult to see that the affairs of this world shrivelled to ashes, that morbid fears grew apace, that a spiritual selfishness, if I may use the term, found easy entrance into hearts prepared by terror. Other-worldliness with its paralysing influence upon practical work, its spurious asceticism, its transference of all hope, and of all the fruitful energies of the soul to objects beyond the limits of this human life, weakened the social conscience of the religious, and made it possible for inconsistencies in the social system to pass unchallenged. That which was strong and helpful in Evangelicalism sprang from the personal devotion to a personal Father. This faith, struggling with the incongruous elements of a creed based in no small measure upon a misinterpretation of the office and message of Jesus Christ, has survived, and will doubtless emerge clearer and more robust, because no longer trammelled by a false theology.

It will lead us, nay, it *is* leading us, to seek here on this earth, and among the sins and sorrows of men, the materials for building the Holy City of God. It is not that the need for salvation is any less urgent, or any less personal than it was to the preacher who heard the terrible cry of the eternally lost ringing in his ears. It is rather that we know God better, trust Him more, and find not *only* beyond the grave the promise of His kingdom. Salvation must still retain its personal meaning (perhaps in the inevitable reaction from such teaching it has lost too much of this), but we give it, we must give it, a wider interpretation.

"'Tis not enough to weep my sins;
'Tis but one step to heaven;
When I am kind to others, then
I know myself forgiven."

We must learn the meaning of God's fatherhood by giving the fullest content to the meaning of brotherhood. We must recognise that because the individual stands in need of redemption from the power of selfishness, that therefore the State, that Society, needs salvation, and we must set about it in the spirit of William Blake when he exclaimed:—

"I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In England's green and pleasant land."

What then has Jesus to say to the State? We must answer this by repeating what Jesus has to say to the individual. He shows us in Himself the supremacy of unselfish love. He directs us to God as its source and centre. He calls us to walk in the *way* of His sacrifice, to trust in the *truth* of His unfolding, to live the *life* which He shows us to be at one with the life of the Father. Our existence, He says, is no aimless wandering, there is behind it no mockery of hope, no cruel sport with the heart's desire. Life has an eternal meaning which passes into vivid reality as we understand the message of Jesus and grasp the profound significance of His personality.

The way, the truth, the life, He is the reality of God, the interpretation of God's character, expressed in human speech, in a human life, the Divine made personal, the Infinite touching the finite, God at one with humanity, the unseen visible in the flesh, the soul's ladder reaching from the known to the unknown, in a word at once the dynamic and the goal of spiritual evolution.

But I repeat, that which He reveals to the individual cannot be confined to the individual. The selfless love, the sympathy, and the passion of the cross are forever radiating outwards. Love is social. The standard for the

individual is to be the standard for society. The Kingdom of God, the higher civilisation of which Jesus was the messenger and prophet, has its seat in the heart, but its outward expression is an inevitable consequence of its inward reality, nay, it is the *test* of that reality. If, for example, that Fatherhood of God is real, and the brotherhood of man means that all men are the children of God, then the term brotherhood covers the whole human race and not merely the Anglo-Saxon, of whom in these imperial days we hear so much to the exclusion of the loftier and the larger thought of the Gospel. "There can be," says the Apostle, who had broken with the narrowness of Jewish tradition, "neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female, for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus."

There is no national limit to the family of God. The tribal deity is dethroned. Most men, whether they are professed Christians or not, have a pretty clear idea of what individual fidelity to the life of Jesus would involve. They know it means unselfishness, the tender service of sympathy, the triumph of chastity, the surrender of the lower appetites and desires to the control of the higher impulses of the soul, become urgent and authoritative through the knowledge of God in Christ. They see Jesus "clothed in the irresistible might of meekness" and they know that to believe in Him really means staking everything upon the victorious power of holy, selfless, redeeming love. In the secret of their hearts men acknowledge this to be the greatest thing in the world, and whenever it is found in its pure, Christlike form, as we find it for example in St. Francis of Assisi and John Woolman, its wonderful magnetic and transforming power is at once felt. But most men, whether because they love the dust-heap, like the man with the muck-rake, and refuse to see the angel with the crown, or because they are too busy

and have not time to think, or because they have more confidence in the world's prudence and the world's methods, are unwilling or afraid to make this great venture of faith. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. . . . thou shalt have treasure in heaven, . . . Follow Me."

Ah! that is just what we will not do. We cling to the shekels of earth, and the treasures of heaven kick the beam. Our hesitancy to accept the full practical consequences of the Gospel is magnified in international conduct, which it goes far to explain. The individual has made some progress, be it ever so small, towards the Christian ideal of conduct. To kill a man in a quarrel is murder, to take his goods by force is theft, to ravage and destroy a man's property is violence, be the provocation what it may. To boast of your wealth, pedigree, strength, and to scoff openly at the weakness or poverty of your neighbour is bad form, not to be tolerated in polite society. Publicly to defame another's character is libel. But mark the transformation when we pass from the conduct of single individuals to the conduct of a group of individuals acting as a nation. To kill a man in a private quarrel is murder; as a national quarrel it is a "regrettable necessity," rewarded however by every mark of public honour and popular acclaim.

To take goods by force in private life is theft; in national life the talk is of national destiny, spheres of influence, annexation; and under the plea of accepting the white man's burden, private companies exploit the lands of savages for the sake of dividends.

To boast of wealth and scoff at poverty in private life is bad form; in national life the parade of ships and troops, the loud trumpeting of orators, the slighting comments upon the shortcomings and peculiarities of the foreigner who serves in the Divine ordering as a counterfoil to our own virtues—all this is accepted by the crowd without question

as the evidence of patriotism. The dominant note is self-praise, self-interest, and when the flag, country, national honour are supposed to be at stake, the muddy depths are stirred by a yellow press, and there emerges, naked and unashamed, the sheer blind hatred of the primitive savage. In the heat of quarrel brotherhood goes to the winds. Both disputants reach out for their bludgeons prepared to strike, and as passion rises the very pulpits join in the shouting. "Thank God," cries a Vicar, "we have done with the cowardice of the Sermon on the Mount." Love your enemies, did you say? Nay, says a Canon of the Church, "the Lord Jesus never says a word against war. . . . The history of the world is full of wars, thus must war be congenial to the mind of God in His evolution of humanity. What does God care for death? What does God care for pain?"

Writes another minister of religion, this time breaking into verse:

"And as I note how nobly natures form
Under the war's red rain, I deem it true
That He who made the earthquake and the storm,
Perhaps makes battles too."

John Newton, who wrote the famous hymn,

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,
In a believer's ear,"

was a slaver, and as he paced his deck beneath which the victims of a foul traffic lay in chains herded like cattle, could say with perfect truth that he never enjoyed such sweet communion with his Maker as in the religious reveries of those deck promenades.

We must not judge too harshly those ministers of religion who, like John Newton, fail to realise all the significance of

their words It required for a generation the concentrated focus of Christian feeling and thought upon the iniquity of the slave traffic, to dispel the moral blindness of those who in all sincerity defended it. It will require a similar concentration to dispel the moral blindness which associates militarism with the love of God.

Read this extract from the newspapers as an example, side by side with the assertion that "war must be congenial to the mind of God," and remembering Him whose life was peace, and who called men from their loneliness and suffering to come unto Him and rest, we cannot for one moment justify the passions of war in His name.

"The temper of the combatants (I quote from the *Yorkshire Post*) has reached an absolutely merciless pitch. No quarter is given on either side, and flags of truce and surrender are disregarded.

"In one of the recent assaults 600 Japanese hoisted the white flag but the Russians ignored it, and the Japanese in the rear, enraged at the action of their comrades, assisted the Russians to shoot them down. Every man fell, and the piteous appeals of the wounded were unheeded. Within a week the last arm had signalled its unregarded prayer, and the shambles where the 600 had fallen was a place of horror."

The terrible gap between the morality of individual and of national conduct, where theft becomes annexation with its thousand excuses, where boastful pride becomes patriotism, and a quarrel leading to violence and murder becomes war with an army for a bludgeon, is indeed one of those fatal inconsistencies which go far to discredit Christianity in the eyes of thoughtful doubters at home and of the heathen abroad. The missionary in China with the Sermon on the Mount in his hand, sadly confesses the obstacle presented by that criminal policy which literally forced a poisonous drug upon the Chinaman at the point of

the bayonet; and when we talk of evangelising South Africa, we may well wonder how the Kaffir will regard the brotherly love of Christians after we have paraded before him the long panorama of a cruel and devastating war?

Already we ridicule the duel, demanding that individuals shall settle differences in courts of law, and there is no logical defence for denying the same principle in the intercourse of nations. International wars must go the way of private and tribal wars, and international differences must be settled, as already they are often settled, in international courts.

It is true that Jesus never categorically condemned war, as He never categorically condemned slavery, but both are alien to His teaching, foreign to the whole temper of His Gospel, and a defiance of the Fatherhood of God. Nor is the Old Testament any justification. The distinction drawn in the Gospels is explicit.

"Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy, but I say unto you, Love your enemies."

Elizabeth Barrett Browning exclaims:—

> "And soon we shall have thinkers in the
> place of fighters. . . .
> What ye want is light, indeed
> God's light organised
> In some high soul."

The thinkers, men like Herbert Spencer and John Morley, have already exposed the costly futility of militarism, its intellectual absurdity, its direct opposition to all true social progress, its menace to the liberty of the people; but that which will overthrow it will be "God's light organised" in a Christian community. For the sin of militarism is that it delays the coming of the Kingdom, as it is the sin of the

Church of Christ that it wavers between the Spirit of the Cross and the spirit of the sword.

It may be true that in the progress of evolution war and slavery have been inevitable factors; it is true that even to-day men are not ready for disarmament, and it is unquestioned that, as in the case of shipwrecks or mine disasters, war has been and is the theatre for the display of a lofty heroism and a noble self-sacrifice. But just as we would not dream of arranging for annual shipwrecks to encourage heroism, so we cannot maintain war for the same purpose; and if evolution means progress, if civilisation as Christ foreshadowed it has any worth, any beauty, any moral grandeur, any spiritual grace, we must seek all means of escape from past traditions to a deeper and truer view of life.

It is the duty of the Christian Church to realise in common experience and intercourse the ideal of her Master. Were she consistent with His teaching the armies of Europe would melt like snow in spring-time, and the vast enginery of war pass like an evil dream.

This thought brings us from the consideration of international relations to that which must ultimately transform them. I mean the spiritual temper of the peoples in whose name acts of war and deeds of violence are done. What Jesus has to say to the State concerns not only the question of foreign politics, but most intimately the welfare of the State itself. Raise the spiritual temperature of the people, and instead of the spectacle of Christian ministers writing heathen apologies for a barbarous survival, war disappears. Raise the spiritual temperature of the people, and instead of twisting the saying, "The poor ye have always with you" into an excuse for the selfishness of wealth, the grinding poverty of a third of the population becomes an evil too heavy to be borne.

I remember hearing the Battle-hymn of the Republic

sung by thousands in Broadway, before the office of the *New York Journal*, during the Spanish-American war. The shameful sequence of events in the Philippines was still a matter of unwritten history, but even then, in the fierceness of the crowd thinking more of the destruction of the American warship *Maine* (for the words "Remember the Maine" hung in great letters before their eyes) than of the Cuban *reconcentradoes*, and intoxicated by the magnificent roll of the music, the last verse jarred painfully in the contrast of its spirit:—

"In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me,
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on."

Aye! take your revenge and "Remember the *Maine*" while God is marching on. The scene has an impressive witness to the facility with which men bind up the name of Christ with ideas altogether at variance with his Gospel. We may, however, redeem that hymn from its relation to the slaughter of men, and accept it as an interpretation of the message of Jesus to the State:—

"As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free
While God is marching on."

"He that seeketh his life shall lose it and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." If brotherhood involves the disappearance of militarism and the growth of a fraternity of nations, what does it involve within the community itself? In what sense are we to die to make men free? Not perhaps in a literal sense, though this has happened and will happen again, but certainly in a spiritual sense, in the sense in which John Woolman realised it when he saw in his vision that the loss of his name meant the death of his own will.

I think anyone who has at all escaped from the frozen grip of indifference, who has entered even a little into the sufferings of Christ, must have felt more than a vague unrest at the extravagant indulgence of the rich, and the miserable stunted life of the poor. There is in it something so flagrantly inconsistent with the spirit of Him who came as a servant to minister, as a physician to heal, and as a Saviour to redeem. With its stern struggle for bare existence, with its luxurious vice and its hopeless penury, its aggressive selfishness and its bitter despair, our social fabric is remote indeed from the city of brotherly love, the city of our dreams.

Hell, said someone, is a place much like London. We may reject that exaggeration, but the social worker will tell you that in tens of thousands of homes the spirit of hell does in truth reign. The problem of that great city crushes as one contemplates it, yet London only repeats in the gathered volume of some five million voices what we hear in fainter tones elsewhere. Thirty per cent. of our people live more or less in the abyss of poverty. The imagination cannot interpret that fact. The most we can do is to lift a corner of the curtain that hides the buried lives of the unfortunate from us.

Consider this deliberate statement made after a careful survey of the poverty of a neighbouring city, namely, "that the wages paid for unskilled labour are insufficient to provide food, shelter and clothing, adequate to maintain a family of moderate size in a state of bare physical efficiency."

The writer I quote continues:—

"And let us clearly understand what 'bare physical efficiency' means. A family living upon the scale allowed for in this estimate must never spend a penny on railway fare or omnibus. They must never go into the country unless

they walk. They must never purchase a half-penny newspaper or spend a penny to buy a ticket for a popular concert. They must write no letters to absent children, for they cannot afford to pay for the postage. They must never contribute anything to their church or chapel, or give any help to a neighbour which costs them money. They cannot save, nor can they join sick club or Trade Union, because they cannot pay the necessary subscriptions. The children must have no pocket-money for dolls, marbles or sweets. The father must smoke no tobacco and must drink no beer. The mother must never buy any pretty clothes for herself or for her children, the character of the family wardrobe as of the family diet being governed by the regulation, 'Nothing must be bought but that which is absolutely necessary for the maintenance of physical health, and what is bought must be of the plainest and most economical description.' Should a child fall ill, it must be attended by the parish doctor; should it die, it must be buried by the parish. Finally, the wage-earner must never be absent from his work for a single day."

These are hard conditions, but beneath these there are yet lower depths of misery.

Need we wonder that the tender conscience of John Woolman was burdened by the sense of social injustice, or that he cried out continually against the selfishness of the rich. His counsel, steeped in the wisdom and spirit of his Divine Master, is faithful and searching in its loving solicitude:

"It is good," he says, "for those who live in fulness to cultivate tenderness of heart, and to improve every opportunity of being acquainted with the hardships and fatigues of those who labour for their living, and thus to think seriously with themselves: Am I influenced by true charity in fixing all my demands? Have I no desire to support myself in expensive customs, because my acquaintances live in such customs?

"If a wealthy man, on serious reflection, finds a witness in his own conscience that he indulges himself in some expensive habits, which might be omitted consistently with the true design of living, and which, were he to change places with those who occupy his estate, he would desire to be discontinued by them,—whoever is thus awakened will necessarily find the injunction binding, 'Do ye even so to them.' Divine Love imposeth no rigorous or unreasonable commands, but graciously points out the spirit of brotherhood and the way to happiness in attaining which it is necessary that we relinquish all that is selfish."

Time does not permit us to pursue this subject, nor is this the place for elaborate schemes of reform. We are not indeed concerned with them to-night. We are concerned rather with that view of life and its responsibility which arises naturally from the teaching of Jesus to the individual and to the state, and which, as we are faithful to His conception of God's Fatherhood and of the all-embracing unity of the family relationship in His great household, we shall accept as our guide. We cannot live to ourselves, even if we would. It matters infinitely *how* we live to others. Rooted in the love and power of Christ we shall not dare to be satisfied with spasmodic service. Brotherhood is not a question of bazaars, of subscriptions, of occasional charities paid as doles to conscience, or the gifts of lightly missed etceteras from the full basket of pleasure. It is the question of a life of stewardship given in all its energies and purposes to the common good. No other life is the complete Christian life. No other life is at once so hard and so easy. It is the way of the Cross, but its guerdon is a crown. Let us then make the venture of faith. The steady, persistent bending of all powers of mind and heart to the formation of a real fraternity of free, equal spirits, whether it be by the laborious study of economics, or the homely offices of neighbourly love, whether it be by the public advocacy

of an ennobling cause, or the private outpouring of the healing gift of sympathy, shall prove the golden age sung by saints and seers no unavailing dream. This is the flowing of the sap from the Vine into the branches, the unity of the root with the leaves, the work of Christ continued in His disciples who realise their lives in Him and find life's sacrament in surrender.

"To lessen the distresses of the afflicted and to increase the happiness of the creation, here," says John Woolman, "we have a prospect of one common interest from which our own is inseparable, so that to turn all we possess into the channel of universal love, becomes the business of our lives."

"The world sits at the feet of Christ,
Unknowing, blind and unconsoled;
It yet shall touch His garment's fold,
And feel the heavenly Alchemist
Transform its very dust to gold."*

* Whittier.

MAN'S RELATION TO GOD.

V.—FAITH AND LIFE.

Scripture portion—EPHESIANS iii. 14–19.

IN discussing the inner meaning of Religion we shall need to preface our consideration by the recognition of some current facts and difficulties.

We may, for instance, as we observe the striking statistical evidence of growing indifference to public congregational worship, query what is worship? And the question would be far from untimely. Judging by the facts there is apparently increasing dissatisfaction with forms and ceremonies, however ancient or historic. Even the basis of church fellowship appears to be under review. Men are groping after some system more human and intimate, which shall express in a less rigid form of worship the gathering sense of social needs. An enquiry on these lines would however soon make it evident that we must go deeper than social needs to explain the cause of the unrest laid bare by the London census and the investigations of Charles Booth. These reveal a widespread sense of unreality, affecting not only those who stray abroad to graze in alien pastures, but running through the most carefully tended flocks. The attempt to give a warmer social colouring to church life is full of hope and far from superfluous, yet it is continually frustrated of its object by the want of intellectual and spiritual grasp upon the vital truths of the soul's experience. It is not enough to change methods, to set up an institutional church with clubs, smoke-room, games-room, lectures, reading circles, and the like: that which is of supreme importance, which overshadows every question of church

organisation, and which really leads us to the inner meaning of religion is the question of the message. Can we say that the view of life through which a congregation has been gathered is quick with the compelling power of a great unrealised spiritual and social ideal? Is it a view of life at all, or is it only a dead tradition?—a concession to the conventional respectability of the modern Pharisee who wears a top hat instead of phylacteries, and prays in the front pew instead of in the market-place? Is the sermon preached because it is the accepted thing that it should be preached, something that is as much a part of the settled constitution as the Union Jack and the British Lion, or because the preacher has something within him from God which *must* find utterance, which he *dare* not withhold?

In answering such questions we should finally be driven to conclude that worship consists not in singing hymns, not in preaching, not in listening to sermons, though all these functions have their necessary place in public gatherings for worship, both as stimulants and as means, but that worship, the end to which these means might minister, implies the individual movement of the soul towards God, the concentration of all its energies in the inward silence of the heart upon the realisation of the fact and presence of the sympathy and life of God. "The sort of belief which religion requires is one which is immediate, very vivid, very moving to the affections, and very influential upon action." This is the belief which should grow out of worship, a true and conscious union of the soul with the will and power and love of the unseen Spirit.

Such worship cannot be performed by proxy; no priest, no minister, no other person can take our place in this supreme effort of the soul; it must be our own proper work and exercise. It lies beyond ritual or sermon, nay, it is best performed in outward silence (a silence for which all

denominations, and not only the Society of Friends, might arrange with real spiritual profit in their public worship), when the individual, stripped of all self-deception, is drawn back from his dependence upon external things, upon sweet music, for example, or upon pulpit eloquence, and forced down on to the bare realities of the inward life.

The questions raised by this discussion will carry us a step further. If there is unreality in worship, we say that there is need of a living message going home to the heart and conscience, of union with God as the fruit of worship. But how can we have these without faith? How can faith be, unless we can in some way or other understand God, see Him and know Him in history, and in contemporary life? Can we thus see Him and know Him? *May* we, in short, *believe* in God? The difficulties are great. The problem of life is so complex. Life is so profound a mystery. Whence came man; whither is he going? What is the meaning of sin, pain, death, the seeming injustice which metes out at the very cradle luxury and pleasure to one, poverty or disease to another? Behind the conflict of existence, the fatalism of law, the terrors of an unknown eternity and of fathomless space, what is there? Is there any fact which can save me from that intolerable loneliness which assails me even in the midst of friends, and the affairs of life? Is there any fact in the universe which can drive out the secret despair bred in my heart by the sense of my impotence, and my insignificance, one as I am of countless millions coming out of the black unknown and passing out again through death to the black unknown, upon one only among countless millions of worlds?

Is there any fact in the universe that can rob death of its sting, the grave of its victory, and give nobility and purpose to my being?

To seek our answer we may explore in three directions

which can be described respectively as the *intellectual*, the *scientific*, and the *personal*. The intellectual we shall find inadequate, because God, the ultimate fact of which we are in search, is not evolved at the end of a process of reasoning in mere "quod erat demonstrandum" fashion. The intellectual faculties of reasoning and logic have of course their most important place, but they are only valid in co-operation with other faculties of observation and apprehension which the intellectual method, followed exclusively, does not call into play. You cannot argue a man into belief in God. You cannot arrive at God's character, even if you can prove His existence, merely by the sequence of logical demonstrations.

The scientific we shall find inadequate, because by itself the study of nature cannot lead us to the knowledge of a God who answers the questions of the heart and satisfies its craving. Nature shows us law in every nook and cranny of the universe, but it cannot reveal a God of personal love. Some people think it can, but the real truth is that, like the Roman Catholic in his cult of the Virgin, they read into the goddess or principle they call Nature that which they have unconsciously borrowed from Jesus Christ. To be strictly scientific in the accepted sense of the term is to be strictly agnostic. Science has its legitimate fields and its legitimate methods, although, like the theologian at whom he so often girds, the scientist is not without his prejudices and his narrow dogmatism. He is to be respected when he speaks according to what he knows. His knowledge is at least something more learned by man about God. Unless we are to fall into an ancient fallacy and exclude God from His universe, we must regard every fact of science as a fresh revelation of His creative activity and power. Nevertheless, scientific knowledge lies on a plane different from that on which the knowledge we seek is to be found. The fact that

radium emits heat without apparent diminution in bulk, or that there are magnetic streams radiating from the sun, and disturbing our magnetic needles at regular intervals, or even the biological fact of our descent from the anthropoid apes and all that this descent implies, cannot help a man to resist a present temptation, or to face death with Christian confidence and hope. Science by itself, is, and must always remain, powerless to give us a God who will draw out the tendrils of the human heart towards Himself.

We turn then to the personal method. We reflect that we are after all personal, and that all our contacts with each other are personal. We may, if we please, denounce an anthropomorphic God, by which terrible formula I suppose we mean that God is the mere gigantic shadow of our reflected selves cast, like the spectre of the Brocken, upon the clouds of our imagination. But in any case, unless we can apprehend God personally, that is, within the limits of our personal nature and understanding, or to put it in other words, unless God can interpret Himself in some way within the limits fixed by our human conditions and capacity, He must, by the terms of the case, remain for ever invisible and unknowable to man.

We are bound to fall back on experience. Is it true that God has never so interpreted Himself? Does the intellectual evidence, such as it is, for a controlling mind in the universe, does the practical evidence, such as it is, of coherence and purpose in Nature, unite with any evidence of personal experience which permits us to add the dynamic formula "God is Love"? In both cases the answer of contemporary experience and of history is unquestionably *yes*, it does. Then where is this revelation? In unnumbered human lives. Martyrs and saints, famous in story, plain men and women whose memory no illuminated Acta Sanctorum has rescued from oblivion, whose chronicles

are the tales of mean streets, unite in an uninterrupted witness which flows forward, a broadening stream of testimony through the years and the centuries. What is the source of this testimony? There are many springs more or less pure and constant, under the shadow of the Himalayas, among the hills of Greece, in the plains of China and of Egypt, but there is only one spring adequate in volume, altogether pure and inexhaustible, a spring which upon a time broke forth in the hills of Galilee and now flows continually in the heart of man. The test of living power in actual experience points to one Divine Human life in history, as the supreme revelation of God. That life is the life of Jesus Christ. That life interprets all other lives governed by its spirit, that life has brought with it a view of God which although it does not explain the mystery of being, makes our individual striving intelligible, and gives the Divine sanction to all that is pure, holy and unselfish. It identifies the highest love we know in man with the character and purpose of the eternal governing power of the universe. This is not theory, but a statement of experimental truth tested by the severest methods known to men and devils. The fires of persecution and the tortures of the rack, or better still (for intellectual obstinacy or the tenderness of conscience in mistaken beliefs may bear these tests), the humdrum of everyday life and the witness of character blossoming to beauty under pain and sorrow,—these tests have been and are continually applied, with the result that the faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ, after nineteen centuries of conflict, misinterpretation and criticism, remains dominant and victorious.

This is surely a stupendous fact which no spectre of the Brocken theory can possibly explain. It looms so large in history that it would be childish, nay, unscientific, to brush it aside. In any earnest quest after God the enquirer must sooner or later come face to face with Jesus Christ.

But then arises the difficulty of the Scripture records. Is the Bible inspired? Are not the Gospels challenged as historical records? And if we are to give up the infallibility of Scripture how can we rely upon the historicity of Jesus? The trouble with such questions is that people continually forget that the real basis of faith is not, never has been, and never will be, an infallible book. The Bible is the gathered literature of a people, intensely human, wide in its range and variety, unequal in its spiritual value. Its inspiration is to be judged by the simple test of its ability to inspire, and its value lies, not in its supposed infallibility, but in its record of phenomena unique in human experience, illustrating the working of God in the human heart, and, above all, the message, life and death of Jesus Christ, and the beginnings of the Christian Church. The theory of an infallible text is purely mechanical, not spiritual, and inasmuch as the theory dehumanises the Bible, while distorting its really divine quality into a parody of the fact, it has worked untold mischief, destroying the sense of reality and lowering the Bible to the level of an idol or a fetish. We may indeed welcome in the higher critic and all that he signifies a return to an intelligent belief in the divine worth of the Scriptures, confident that scholarly and reverent study of material so rich in spiritual teaching must be increasingly fruitful. Truth can never be destroyed, in the fiercest light of criticism it can never suffer.

If some misconceptions have to be removed, if here we took for history what was really folk-lore, or there we read as canonical a text that was interpolated, faith will ultimately be clearer and stronger for the correction. But of this we may be perfectly sure, that whatever may be the ultimate results of the development of honest, scientific Biblical criticism, nothing can eliminate the person of Jesus nor weaken the value of a single text which is spiritually true.

If we attempt to prove that Jesus never lived, that He is a mere literary creation, an amalgam of Greek and Jewish thought, we have then to explain the Christian Church, and the dynamic of the personal revelation of Jesus in modern life. The fact is that the Bible is not apart from human history, but organic with it. The evidence for Jesus does not rest upon the Gospels alone, it rests also upon the history of two thousand years, a history unintelligible and impossible apart from Him, and finally upon the living witness of the heart, a combined testimony which must increasingly vindicate the broad, substantial truth of the Gospel records.

"So long," says Erskine of Linlathen, "as a man receives his Christianity merely on the authority of a church or a book—so long as it has not commended itself to the higher reason and moral sense or reached his inner consciousness—he has no real hold of Christianity; he is believing only in his church or in his book."

The correspondence of the conscience with the teaching of the Bible is its surest defence.

Freed from this entanglement we are at liberty in the pursuit of our message to consider *what Jesus has to say to the individual.* God is no longer an unknowable "first cause," but a Father who cares alike for each one of us, whose love is warm and personal, radiating outwards with continual activity, not different from human love save in its absolute purity, and the depth and range of its sympathy. Nothing shuts us out from the full benefit of that love but our own will. Repentance is the one condition of sonship and forgiveness. God must find in us some likeness to Himself before He can make Himself felt and known. To be at one with God, is to accept His love and to recognise His will as a governing principle. We must therefore turn

towards Him and view life in some measure as He views it, hating indifference, sloth, impurity, and selfishness as He hates them. There must be some point of contact between our souls and His, and to secure this we must cut down the hedge of prickly cactus which sin has reared about the soul. Or, to put it more accurately, His pierced hands cannot break through to draw us out until we on our side of the fence begin the work of pulling down. If we will do this His response is instant, even when it is not recognised, for His love is unsleeping in its continual watch to seek an entry in the heart for which it yearns. Some regard this view of the Divine relationship as too easy. Sin, they say, must be punished before God can forgive. Eternal Justice must be satisfied. The answer is complete, there *is* punishment. Justice *is* satisfied and this without any legal figment. Sin, not as a theory but as a matter of fact, carries its own punishment with it. Repentance is not a trivial or easy matter, it involves the tearing up of evil growths by the roots, and often alas, a torn and bleeding heart. Repentance implies not only the joy and peace of surrender, the escape to a quiet haven from a sea of storms, but the sharp pain of acknowledged shortcomings, the bitterness of remorse for wasted years.

It is in realtion to this fact, to the terrible hold of sin upon human nature, of the magnitude of the moral effort which repentance often involves, that the personal message of a suffering Redeemer has its supreme importance.

"All that is fair and beautiful," says Mrs. Besant, "in Christian morality has been taught in the world ages before Christ was born." That may be more or less true, but the statement misses the point. Some seem to imagine that the soul of truth can exist in unvarying definiteness without a body of historic fact, without an embodiment, a witness, a type of the truth. Matthew Arnold hints at the real need

of humanity when he says:—"A correct scientific statement of rules of virtue has upon the great majority of mankind simply no effect at all." Jesus did not come to contradict what had been truly said by others before this time, *He came to personify the truths they expressed.* The Gospel is not a mere code of morals, it is Jesus, and Jesus is Himself the dynamic of moral force. In Him God has spoken, in Him God lays bare His heart: He reveals love, He reveals sin, He shows us that there is no gulf of radical difference between His nature and our own. He shows us the possibilities of our life, exposes with merciless truth the barren emptiness of existence apart from Him, and pleads with tenderest passion for the life union of the Divine harmony and love. Upon the cross, the witness to an eternal fact, the suffering inflicted upon the loving heart of the Father by the sin of the world is exposed in its true nature, and the appeal of God takes its most vibrant and urgent note.

As in the life of Christ the virtues of humility, meekness, sympathy, and purity receive the sanction of the Divine nature and are for ever identified with it, so upon the Cross the quality of the Divine self-sacrifice is revealed, and self-sacrifice for ever identified with God.

Here is the focus of the message of Jesus to the individual. It is at once a vivid illumination of the true issues before the soul, and an intense and urgent appeal from the heart of God to the heart of man, written, spoken in language man can understand.

From this appeal flow practical consequences. The life Jesus unfolds to the individual is not different for the state. The wars of international jealousy, the huge enginery of militarism, the selfishness of the rich, and the evils of poverty, are alike inconsistent with the higher civilisation to which Jesus calls us, they are alien and hostile to the nature and purpose of God.

I do not deceive myself by the supposition that in this statement of Christian truth I have put even a tithe of the objections which earnest doubt may have to offer. Points of view are so different, the deepest thoughts are so hard to express, that it would be impossible within the limits of a public lecture even to state, much less to anticipate (were that within my power), every intellectual difficulty, or to render exactly the different shades of meaning which words convey. At best words are but symbols. The term fatherhood as applied to God, and the term son as applied to Jesus, are for example symbolic of ideas which it is intended to associate with God and with Jesus, and to express the oneness in essence which runs from man up to God through Jesus, rather than to be interpreted as a scientific statement of fact. Often those who have been separated from each other by the intellectual forms of their belief, and have perhaps discussed their differences with not a little of that unhappy temper which so often mars theological disputes, have been really quarrelling about a superficial difference due to the imperfections of human speech, and concealing a fundamental unity upon which fellowship might have been based.

Recognising these difficulties of mental *approachment* I must nevertheless assume for the sake of argument that we are agreed in the presentation of the Gospel which has just engaged us, and I pass therefore to the concluding question: —If these things be true, how may we appropriate their truth? What is the inner meaning of religion?

In discussing this question we shall, I think, find ourselves at length upon common ground. For although the diversities of individual outlook are great, the needs and experience of humanity are universal and the same.

Moreover, it is one thing to have clear intellectual views, another to be pure and unselfish. Clear views are an incalculable gain, they add to the efficacy of faith, but they

are the means, not the end or object of faith. The end is neither philosophy nor theology, neither creed nor formula, but simply character redeemed and possessed by the power of love.

It is a great mistake to think that faith is exclusively or even mainly an affair of the head. It is mainly an affair of the heart, a question of the spiritual temper or attitude of the soul. As William Law expresses it in one of his essays, faith "is a living, working power of the mind, that wills, desires, and hopes, and trusts and believes and obeys." Aye, *obeys*. That is where our faith is weak. That is where we need the potency of the Gospel. We know better than we do. Perceiving the good we continually choose the evil.

Let us put the case as a matter of personal experience, for we are here at the intensely personal centre of all religion. We are face to face with the question of personal salvation. I am, shall we say, the average man. I have none of the vices which shock public opinion or bring me under the penal laws framed by society to protect itself and its respectability. I have more or less, perhaps in a neutral fashion, the good esteem of my fellows. I pay my debts, live within my income, am indulgent to my family and—to myself. Every now and then I am stirred by something of which I read or hear, the distress of the unemployed or some peculiar case of trouble, and for a brief space am unusually charitable. I give a guinea, ten guineas, fifty guineas. I speak at a meeting, I attend a bazaar, and then by imperceptible degrees slip back into my normal forgetfulness. If anyone were to charge me with unorthodoxy I should be painfully shocked. I read the Bible, perhaps sometimes wondering what I have read five minutes afterwards. I go certainly once, perhaps under favourable circumstances twice, to church, chapel or meeting. I don't

understand what is meant by the Trinity or the Atonement; I leave all that to the clergyman or the minister, but in a more or less definite way I believe that my earthly life is so irreproachable that my eternal future is sure to be pleasant. Christ, I say, is my Saviour, by which I mean (if I were ever so brutally frank with myself, which I am not) that He will leave me alone in this world, and save me in the next. So I go on. Now and then someone upon whose companionship I depend is called beyond the grave. On such occasions I am deeply touched. It is always hard to say good-bye to one's friends. I have solemn thoughts, not unmingled with self-pity. I feel stirred for a time to double my devotions. And then the tide of life, business and pleasure, flows in again. The gap is filled. I forget, and once more am satisfied to live on the surface. I flutter through the hours like a butterfly in a meadow—dipping aimlessly now here, now there. But let us suppose that the strong blow of some great catastrophe were to smite me. Something that destroyed the routine of self-pleasing and compelled me to face the realities which I have so steadfastly shirked. Let it be some permanent physical restriction like blindness, or some financial disaster involving penury—no matter what. Where do I stand now? What is there in this life of mine that is real, what is there that carries comfort with it through the long years yet to come? Little or nothing. I have spent my life for things that have irrecoverably passed with time. They cost me much once, they are worth nothing to me now. Everything is bitter, life and the interminable future are desolate. Suddenly I realise that my Christ was a lay figure. I made him and draped him myself. I realise that at the heart of what I call my religion was but selfishness, that my faith was self-deception, and that my insincerity has brought upon me the doom of spiritual emptiness. I have nothing to carry me

with hope and confidence through the gates of death. "The heresy of all heresies," says William Law, "is the worldly spirit." There are tens upon tens of thousands of such heretics, living upon make-belief and taking it for belief. God save us from lives like theirs, from good-natured indifference, the indolence of slumbrous souls!

But how are we to be saved? How are we to realise the Christ of our Gospel? "If a man be sincere," says a recent writer, "then his sincerity is the hammer that drives his belief home, and the stronger the sincerity the deeper will the practical point of the belief penetrate into his life and conduct." Beyond all question a first consideration is sincerity, the sincerity born, for example, of conviction for sin and the desire for pardon. We must honestly seek the true life, we must honestly wish to escape the toils of self-love. Assume this sincerity. Assume for example that I have grown dissatisfied with a drifting life, that I have felt a touch of that satiety which is the scourge of the worldling. How then am I to set about the business of salvation? I turn to Christ, the Christ of the Gospels. What is salvation by Christ? It is nothing mysterious, it is to be made like unto Him. Again I quote from William Law:—

"Wherever thou goest, whatever thou dost, at Home or Abroad, in the Field, or at Church, do all in a desire of union with Christ, in Imitation of His Tempers and Inclinations, and look upon all as nothing, but that which exercises and increases the Spirit and Life of Christ in thy Soul. From morning to night keep Jesus in thy Heart, long for Nothing, desire Nothing, hope for Nothing, but to have all that is within thee changed into the Spirit and Temper of the Holy Jesus. Let this be thy Christianity, thy Church and thy Religion. For this new Birth in Christ thus firmly believed and continually desired, will do everything that thou wantest to have done in thee; it will dry up all the Springs of Vice, stop all the workings of evil in thy Nature, it will bring all that is Good into thee, it will open all the Gospel within thee, and thou wilt know what it is to be taught of God."

Here we have the method, not only of the mystic, but of every soul who has sought God through Christ. It is the method of experiment. The test of the Christian life from the inside. A cathedral window is ugly enough until you look through it from within, and then the dull leaded glass with its meaningless contortions of device, flashes into ordered beauty. Moreover, it is an experiment which again and again has vindicated the method, in the evolution of character fragrant with peace and love, breathing the benediction of holy calm upon the fever of a restless heart.

But we must know the *steps* of this pilgrim's progress. Let me state the case again in terms of personal experience. I determine to seek this peace of God till I find it. My sincerity is not to be doubted. I am earnest in my quest. So far so good. I have the first condition requisite. I am willing to pull down the prickly cactus hedge of my sins. I realise that self is the devil's workshop. I want to get away from the prison of my selfishness. I want to realise love. But I am not going to do it by mere mortifications and penances. In my desire to practice self-sacrifice I am in danger of confounding the mutilated life of the ascetic with the cross and discipline of Christ. I am right in thinking that the worldly life full of self-indulgence is a small and contemptible life, I am wrong in thinking that the Christian life consists merely in not doing things that other people do. The Christian life is not an empty garret but a palace beautiful by the side of which the life of the most sumptuous sybarite is a wretched hovel. Moreover, mortification of this sort breeds a judging temper and a spirit of pride. Self-sacrifice is self-realisation. I must approach my holy experiment from another side. I must seek not merely to lop off but to grow. I must acquire something I have not got. And here is a difficulty. In practical experience how am I to know what is meant by

listening to the voice of Christ, obeying Him and following Him? How am I to identify the substance behind the current phrasing of the religious in my own inner consciousness? At first indeed there may be nothing to recognise, no intimation of Divine power, no distinct voice thrilling and commanding the soul, no presence before whom I instinctively kneel. No, perhaps not. But there is conscience, and conscience is a guide I can follow. For example! Be thoughtful of others, even in little things. Make a practice of forgetting yourself. In the past it was always *I*, what do they say and think of *me*, am *I* getting the recognition that is my due? Now let it be otherwise. Am I helping him, what can I do for him, what am I thinking of him? Am I giving him his due? Without cessation, in the intimacies of the home life or on the broader stage of public service, the choice between recognised alternatives recurs. Generally I know perfectly well which is the right choice. Some one angers me, insults me. I want to hit back, sting with a sharp repartee, crush with a jibe. I practise restraint. I return soft answers. And so I might illustrate at large. In every activity of life I might select instances to mark the steps of my pilgrim's progress.

But I cannot rest satisfied here. I seek not only discipline but victory. I want to know not only conscience, but Christ. Yes, but to the sincere experimentalist, using his conscience as a guide, and seeking always to focus his life on that of Jesus Christ as he knows Him in the Gospels and recognises Him in His faithful disciples, there comes a time when the line between conscience and Christ grows very thin. There comes a time when the higher life of which I am always aware, and which I have tried to follow, becomes so merged in my thought of Christ and my devotion to Him, that I can hardly distinguish the two in my mind. There comes a time when suddenly I am on my knees,

my whole soul flooded with light and love, tears in my heart and eyes, an unspeakable peace enfolding me. The pierced hands have reached through to me at last and draw me gently forth to Him. "Come unto me and rest," and I answer, Yea, for I am hid with Christ in God.

I have sketched, you say, a hypothetical career. No, it is a story from real life. You say I have spoken in mystical language. I answer, Yes, the supreme moment cannot be defined in the dry language of theology, nor can words express it. You say the experience is the result of mental suggestion practised over a term of years. I answer, No one believes that who has once been there and taken off his shoes on holy ground,—the reality is too overpowering, the effect too profound. But is this the experience of everyone who tries the experiment? That question needs a careful answer. There are for example degrees in the sincerity and earnestness with which the experiment is pursued, and we must consider the great variety of temperament, no two individuals seeing life with the same eyes. I think the true answer is this, that the measure of God's response is the urgency and strength of our appeal, but it would be mischievous to assert that the character of the response always bears the same identity. I believe experience shows on the contrary that the character of the response is conditioned by individual needs, though in its substance it must always be the same—the consciousness, more or less clear, of union with God in thought and action, of an eternal purpose and worth in human life, and of an all embracing love. This union and sense of love, if experience be a guide, is strongest and deepest where the thought of God has been focussed in the personality of Jesus Christ.

But perhaps I have made haste too fast. If I go back to my pilgrim I find in his experience something upon which I have not touched. It is not a smooth progress

that he makes. His sincerity wavers before the fierce resistance of hereditary evil, ingrained selfishness, natural sloth. There are times when he cannot keep his eyes upon the Cross, when the goal upon which he set his heart grows dim, when the baser self yearns for the flesh pots of Egypt. How can he win through? There is only one way, the way of prayer. I do not mean formal praying, the rapid gabbling of the Lord's Prayer, or the set petition for outward benefits. I mean the prayer of the sinful man crying from the depths of his great need, "Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a right spirit within me"; the prayer of the longing soul seeking to escape from the clog of fleshy imperfection and to breathe the free, pure air of the spiritual life. Such prayer to be potent must be personal, it must throb with the conviction of human helplessness and of God's power to save, it must spring from a heart in which deep emotion has broken the reserve of pride. And while in its supreme expression such prayer may be only occasional, victory will be finally won only by the continuous cultivation of the prayerful spirit. In the spiritual athlete prayer becomes a habit of mind, not a spasmodic exercise. It becomes indeed the sign-manual of the soul's intimacy with God.

Amid the feverish activities of these modern days, when the loud-voiced interests of the world stun the ear, may we seek by devotional exercise in the private sanctuary of the home, no less than in public worship, to realise the saving love of God. And as we turn our thoughts inward to face the solemn realities of eternal life, may the light of God's holiness reveal our sin as He sees it, that knowing our weakness we may seek His strength, and pray the Father whom Jesus has shown us, to take us as children by the hand and lead us into His everlasting truth, by the way of service and a life of love freely given.

GOD IN CHRIST.*

In the history of the Christian Church we observe fluctuations in the emphasis set upon the different aspects of the work and revelation of Jesus Christ. It is as though in different ages, men have felt the need for Christ under different forms. Fundamentally, the need is always one and the same. The "Weltschmerz," as Goethe calls it, and as a man like Romanes felt it, is at heart the craving for a personal knowledge of God, for Plato's sure raft whereon haply we may cross this world's troubled sea with hope of safe anchorage at our journey's end.

Sometimes these fluctuations of emphasis are very marked, and we see that the doctrinal teaching about Christ and His work which has proved helpful to one generation is a difficulty to another. This is best illustrated by the history of the doctrine of the Atonement.

The first theory of the Church maintained that Christ saved men from sin by offering a ransom to Satan, and this theory prevailed as the orthodox Christian doctrine for nearly a thousand years.

It was very simple, and, in the childhood of faith, very easy to believe, but it had an obvious defect.

In the eleventh century Anselm saw that this doctrine exalted the power of Satan and set up a dual monarchy over the world, limiting the power of God. He asserted therefore that the ransom paid by Christ was paid not to Satan but to God.

He argued that sin was a terrible offence against the infinite holiness of God. Only an infinite satisfaction could cancel it, and this, man, as a finite being, could not

* This and the following paper appeared in the *Young Friends' Review* of November, 1904, and February, 1905, respectively.

render. God therefore in His great mercy became man, in order that, in Christ, the infinite sacrifice or ransom might be paid.

At the time of the Reformation this doctrine was modified and expressed more directly in the terms of *criminal law*. The satisfaction due to God was thought of as *punishment*, and Christ as being punished by God for our sins.

This Reformation theory is known as the theory of *penal substitution*, and its particular defect lies in this, that it destroys the reality and freedom of Divine forgiveness.

It has been superseded by what is known as the *governmental theory*, a theory still prevalent, especially among Scotch theologians, but now losing its hold. God, it is said, cannot forgive freely without threatening the majesty of Eternal Law. This law is inexorable justice, sin is a breach of the law, the law must therefore be vindicated. Christ upon the Cross satisfied or vindicated the law on behalf of humanity, and the law, or the demands of Eternal Justice, being, so to speak, put out of court, Love had untrammelled play and God was made able to forgive freely, and of His own grace.*

For many at the present day, all these theories are painfully unreal. They fall, as it were, outside the range of the inward experience of the soul. Where they do not outrage the moral consciousness they fail to interpret the vital facts of the spiritual life.

Once, doubtless, they were real enough; to this day some one of these statements, or some modification of them, still holds sway in many minds, still gives comfort and strength. But it is a symptom common to all denominations that an increasing proportion (probably the majority) of the younger generation regard what we loosely call *the*

* Of what is called the moral theory we will speak later.

doctrine of the Atonement as a difficulty, rather than as a help. What conclusion are we to draw?

Some say that this feeling of difficulty represents a wicked spirit of unbelief, but that view does not square with the facts. Many who feel the difficulty most are the most distressed at their inability to accept a belief which they are told is vital to salvation. So far from the doubters being indifferent to the person and work of Christ, there was never a time when both were more anxiously discussed.

Thoughtful people are making strenuous endeavour, and the effort is full of promise, to get behind shibboleths and merely borrowed beliefs to a vital knowledge of the truth of God.

It is quite possible that this attitude of mind may involve a change of emphasis, but that it marks a decay of faith in Jesus Christ is not true.

When we recall the striking development through which the doctrine of the Atonement has already passed we can hardly insist that the present must be the final interpretation, nor need we be alarmed if there is evidence of further development, and even of considerable modification.

If there be any cause for alarm it lies rather in the fact that the doctrine of the Atonement, as most commonly presented, is proving, in so many cases, a barrier to the acceptance of Jesus Christ.

Our object must be, not the blind and rigid maintenance of a doctrine, at all costs and for its own sake, but the realisation in the hearts of sinful men and women of the redeeming life of Christ. Doctrines are means, not ends, a fact the Church has been too slow to learn. The end transcends all doctrines and is spiritual union with God through Jesus Christ our Lord; this is the one purpose of the Gospel, it is the one purpose of the Church of Christ.

When we are faced with such a symptom as that just

described, we must endeavour sympathetically to understand just what that symptom means. We must not jump to hasty conclusions. Human needs are the same, but the intellectual outlook is extreme in its diversity. We must avoid *doctrinaire* assertions, imputations of pride or dishonesty to those who differ from us. We must not imagine that to insist upon a view which has been helpful in the past, or to ourselves, is necessarily to help another. What is clear to us may be dark to him. He may need to approach from another side, to seek his interpretation in other formulæ.

We must begin by seeking a common ground. What is that common ground? It is experience. The sense of sin and of shortcoming, the spiritual loneliness of alienation from God, the longing to know Him, to be pure, to be free from the miserable limitations and checks of our faulty nature, our selfishness, our irritability, our false pride, our unsociableness, from the deeper sins of the flesh,—these are the lot of all, the experience of all. Every man in measure knows, in the secret of his heart, the craving to escape, and the power of evil, and, *substantially*, the way of escape is the same for all: Surrender to the highest, the holiest influence we know, repentance, a hearty shame for the past, a loathing for all that is alien to the purity of mind and soul, and with the growing love of Goodness the incoming of the *power* of Goodness, the gathering sense of internal peace and unity.

Yes! The substantial method and reward of salvation must be the same for every man. The solidarity of the human race demands this.

But is there then no place and importance to be given to the mental apprehension of Divine truth? Of course there is. We shall come to that presently. My immediate object is to drive controversy back to the true beginnings of unity

and understanding. For although it is true that to see truth clearly is an incalculable reinforcement in the warfare with evil, it is not true that to think correctly is absolutely necessary to salvation. In shaping our beliefs we must deal with facts, not with abstract theorems. If, for example, we can express a spiritual truth of our personal experience when we say that we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour, then we are pronouncing the fact and completeness of our spiritual victory as we could not otherwise pronounce it. But to say this is not to pronounce a dogma, an assertion of the hide-bound theologian, it is the statement of a practical truth that can be tested by the history of the individual and of the Church.

And mark this! It is a statement that has remained true through all the vicissitudes of the doctrine of the Atonement. Those who believed that Christ paid His ransom to the Devil, those who believed that Christ paid His ransom to God, those who believed that Christ was punished for our sins, those who believed that Christ vindicated Eternal Justice and liberated God to forgive us freely, and those who feel the unreality of one and all of these statements, unite on this common ground, that they have found as a living experience that Jesus Christ was their Saviour.

Here we have a hint as to the direction in which some measure of intellectual unity may be found, or the lines upon which a helpful statement of Divine truth may be built up. When we find ourselves at variance, let us cease from chopping logic and go back to the facts of real life, for it is these facts and not the theories of schoolmen that need interpretation. Nay! the schoolmen themselves are to be studied and respected only where they seek such interpretation in the spirit of truth.

The gravamen of the charge so often laid against theology, the reason for the contempt poured upon it, especially by

men of scientific habits of thought, is to be found in its frequent remoteness from the pressing difficulties and demands of the soul. The subject matter of theology cannot, as some nevertheless believe, be studied in vacuo. It is too much entangled in the heartstrings of humanity to be separated and regarded apart.

In any discussion, I repeat, the difficulties and demands of the soul must be our starting point. The history of the Christian Church would have been spared the blemish of many fruitless controversies had men been willing to turn from the arid deserts of scholastic disputation to consider with earnestness what I may call the spiritual psychology of the human heart.

Let us then, in relation to this difficulty illustrated by the doctrine of the Atonement, establish some of the elementary conditions which limit the whole question of belief, recognising that for those who feel the difficulty of past or current interpretations, a frontal attack, so to speak, may not prove the shortest way to victory.

As I understand it, the Atonement, using the term to cover what is called the plan of salvation, has become a stumbling block to many earnest people who desire above all else to know God in Christ. The difficulty is aggravated by the effect upon the whole body of Christian thought of the scientific doctrine of evolution, and of critical Biblical scholarship, working in harmony with the study of comparative religion.

The doctrine of the Atonement is not so much doubted as felt to be unreal. Where doubt exists it goes deeper, playing rather round the validity of Christ's claim to reveal the Father. Indeed the real point at issue is this:—Granted, as most will grant, that Jesus was an historic personality, was He—without pressing for a subtle philosophical determination of the meaning of divinity—was He, as we practically understand the word, divine?

In attempting an answer, let us get further back. Look where you will in history, you find religion. Sometimes faint, sometimes rich and deep, but always there. This is a fact—not a theory, not a doctrine. Vague or clear, pure or coarse, spiritual or sensual, gentle or cruel, in some form expression is given to a common human instinct, the instinct to look beyond man for the interpretation of life. Are we to argue that this instinct was misplaced—that it corresponds to no reality, that there is no interpretation of life beyond humanity,—no fourth dimension? Apart from the fact that such a statement would be an unscientific assumption, there is that in the cumulative experience of humanity which not only bids but literally *compels* us to assert (perhaps it may be with only a dumb conviction) that there *is* a reality corresponding to the instinct of religion—a reality to which we can pray. If it were not so, then, greater than the problem of the existence of evil, would be the problem of the existence of prayer. That reality to which we pray, the reality outside ourselves, we call God.

But history tells us more than this. Every religion credits the supreme power with supreme qualities. In the grosser stages of consciousness, and in cases of moral retrogression, the supreme power is often supremely bad, but the grand truth that emerges is this,—that, as humanity progresses from lower to higher intelligence, the supreme power stands forth more and more supremely good. The presence of evil may cloud the vision. Often in ignorance or despair Evil is throned in the sky, but slowly and surely Good is recognised as the victorious factor in the great Struggle of Life. In the belief of man, Goodness and God become one.

This is a fact, not a theory, not a doctrine; it is a fact of history.

But again history tells us more than this. In the gathered biography of the human race, in the *vie intime* of the human soul, there is nothing more pathetic, nothing more persistent, than that of which we spoke at the commencement of this discussion,—the passionate longing to know personally this reality to which we pray.

What are we to say to this longing? Are we to say that God is good, and in the same breath that His goodness is unapproachable, incommunicable? Think what supreme goodness means,—has come to mean as a historic fact. It is just the reverse of unapproachable and incommunicable. What are the terms we associate with goodness? They are at once love, unselfishness, pity, sympathy, the spirit of self-sacrifice. Is the supreme goodness less than these? Is it not rather their sum? For goodness, as the world has come through long travail to know it, is not an abstraction, it is not passive. To talk of goodness as impersonal, inactive, is to destroy the meaning of the word. It simply cannot be either. Goodness can only be personal.* The Cheshire cat could fade away till only the grin was left. But that was in a professedly "nonsense book." A man cannot fade away till only his goodness is left. He may and does when he dies leave the memory of his goodness behind him, and the memory lives in another person, bearing fruit as goodness in his life, by the power of example, but it does not and cannot survive as an abstraction.

But if our conviction be true, that there is an outward reality, and if the accumulated testimony of the human heart be also true that this outward reality is good, how can we, in the light of this experience and testimony,

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* I mean, of course, personal as implying volition, consciousness, individuality; not mere bodily shape, the temporary vehicle for the expression of personality.

proceed to declare that this outward reality is one with which we cannot communicate, and that God is a silent God?

We should not only be guilty of a contradiction in terms, we should be making an assumption, rather than stating a fact, following the theologian in the very practice for which we condemned him.

Moreover, it would be an assumption denied by an overwhelming multitude, a great cloud of witnesses. Sinners and saints, men in the miry clay, and men on the mountains of vision, men who suffered and men who rejoiced, every sort, every condition, an unbroken apostolic succession, rise to refute you. "To me, and to me, my Lord hath spoken. I have seen His face and my heart glories in His love."

This is a fact, not a theory, not a doctrine, it is a fact of human history.

How has He spoken? The saint knows and can tell you best in his own language, tell you as Madame Guyon tells you in her Autobiography, or John Woolman, lying on his bed, sick of pleurisy. From all lands and all ages, divine voices call to you. History, did you only know it, is the voice of God, many tongued.

But is there no commanding voice, none that gathers up the scattered messages of all the times of God in one clear call? Yes! there is one. In these last days God has spoken to us by His Son.

Ah! but you say, this indeed is assumption. Now you depart from fact and enter the region of theology. How can you defend this statement? The Gospels are challenged; taken as historical evidence, they must be regarded as *subjudice*. You are arguing from inadequate premises.

But I say, No! you are wrong. We accept our self-imposed conditions: we keep close to the facts of the heart's experience,—the final and valid test.

The witness for Christ does not rest solely, nor in one sense even primarily, upon the Gospels. Grant them the fallible writings of fallible men, grant interpolations, grant them not history in the strict modern sense: the witness does not stop there, it stretches unbroken through twenty centuries and is never clearer than to-day. Cut out the Gospels and you cleave a chasm in history that nothing else can fill, you are faced by living forces that only Jesus Christ can explain.

First judge Christ by the effect He has produced, is producing. Compare, check that effect, the forces He has liberated, with the best the world has to offer you apart from Him.

Then judge the claim which the Gospels make for Him.

In an article in the *Contemporary* for August, Dugald Macfadyen writes:—

"The Gospel which is the distinctive contribution of Christianity to the world's history, is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Gospel. It is not His teaching alone, though that is full of glad tidings; it is not His death alone for the sin of the world, though His death as the means of man's reconciliation with God is included in the Gospel; it is not even His rising again, though by it life and immortality are brought to light: His teaching, His cross and His resurrection find their ground and explanation in what He was—they are the exposition and unfolding of His personality. The new fact which is itself both God's spell, the Divine word to and in Humanity, and the good news to men, is that, within the limits of the great human family, there has been one life, one personality, in whom the perfect relation of humanity to God has been achieved, and the eternal character and inner nature of God revealed."

I must be forgiven for so long a quotation. It takes me to the limit of my space. I hope in another paper to go further, and discuss the relation of this line of thought to the difficulty of the Atonement.

If history is true, God has spoken in language that we can understand. He is not a silent God because He is supremely good. Nay, He so loved the world that He sent His only begoteen Son. This is the testimony of the Gospels. It is the testimony of martyrs sealed in their blood, of wayfaring folk whose sainthood no Acta Sanctorum has enshrined in illuminated text. It is the gathering witness of twenty centuries. Will you set yourself against it, or will you "taste and see"?

Will you, with Browning, acknowledge in your heart the combined strength of power and love, and repeat after him what he, a modern of the moderns, has written with passionate conviction:—

> "I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ,
> Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee,
> All questions in the earth and out of it,
> And has so far advanced thee to be wise."*

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* "A Death in the Desert."

GOD IN CHRIST.

II.—THE PRODIGAL SON.

In the first paper of which this is the sequel, we defined love as necessarily active and personal. Love cannot be abstract in the sense of passive non-personal existence, or as apart from volition and object. That would be to state a contradiction in terms. Love is essentially social. It is the expression of a spiritual force, radiating from a personal centre, and having its motive in persons. If then we believe that God is love, we believe not in a passive God, indifferent to human suffering and need, but in a personal God who cares for every individual soul, who is ever in the intensity of His sympathy seeking to make Himself known, to make His redeeming and healing power felt.

Love, as we understand it in the intercourse of human life, is the sum, to name no other qualities, of tenderness, pity, sympathy, thoughtfulness, insight, unselfishness, self-abnegation. In its highest expression it is pure and holy, and in that form it is recognised as the greatest power in the world. Men possessed with it are called saints. In some communities they are worshipped. This love, which we know in history and experience, we find in the Gospels personified, active, and powerful, in Jesus Christ; we find it here indeed in the purest form known to human consciousness. Moreover Jesus puts forth the tremendous claim that He and the Father are one, that in other words love as we see it in Him is the *same* in character as the love of God Himself. It is true that Jesus says "The Father is greater than I"; that the Creator with His infinite power and knowledge is greater than the Creator self-limited in the flesh, but the love of God is not different *in kind* from the

love of Jesus. Nay, Jesus is the outcome of that love. "For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son"—the scripture is familiar to us. There is nothing wonderful in this if we believe that God is love. Man could not know God except within the limits of human consciousness, he could not identify God except by identifying traits of character in Him similar in kind to those which he knew in himself. Jesus is the identification mark of God. The terms "abstract" and "infinite" so often applied to God in philosophical argument are really incomprehensible —they are the letter X in the algebraical equation, useful till the solution is found. When we say we can believe in an abstract, infinite God we are really juggling with our intellects. We can as a strict matter of fact do nothing of the sort. We do not believe in God until we get some human hold upon Him, and realise Him in terms which come within the range of our actual experience. If we can accept the quotation with which I closed my last article, and say with Macfadyen that "within the limits of the great human family, there has been one life, one personality, in whom the perfect relation of humanity to God has been achieved, and the eternal character and inner nature of God revealed," then we have gone a long way towards the solution of the Atonement problem. Jesus is the bridge between man and God, the necessary means to the fullest knowledge of the Divine nature. Without God interpreted in human terms, God would be forever unknowable to the human mind; and one great fact which emerges from the Gospels, where Jesus as the interpretation of God's character and purpose, is Himself the Gospel, is the identity in kind between the love of God and pure, unselfish human love. If Jesus and the Father are one, then God's relations to us are in the Spirit of Jesus—they are in the spirit of a good human father's relations to his children. We have to do, not with an

"unknowable first cause," but with a God we *can* know and understand, and as the unity of Jesus with God is grasped, and the identity of pure love in the Divine and human life is realised, the harsh judge throned in a distant celestial court becomes forever an impossible conception.

Let us, then, accepting Jesus as God expressed in human terms, and identifying the spirit of Jesus with the spirit of God, examine the Gospel view of human relationship. Tenderness, pity, sympathy, thoughtfulness, insight, unselfishness, self-abnegation—all are there. The love of Jesus is a love we can identify in human experience,—and remember Jesus *is* the Gospel.

Then how does this affect the doctrine of the Atonement?

We shall soon discover if we turn to the story of the Prodigal Son. Theologians with a pre-conceived theory to defend will tell us that this parable is theologically incomplete, that it does not give us the whole Gospel. It is at any rate absolutely harmonious with the whole spirit of the Gospel, and unlike some texts the true meaning of which it is difficult to define, it so expresses truth that the meaning it is intended to convey is left beyond doubt. It is neither an isolated fragment, like an uprooted text, nor an erratic boulder out of place in its environment. On the contrary it expresses the spirit of the Gospel with rare tenderness and force, and with an application deeply practical, intimate and real. If the parable of the Prodigal Son has any meaning, it sets forth the character and the conditions of Divine forgiveness—the relation of God to sinful man. Accustomed as we are to elaborate theological theories, based upon the teaching of the early fathers, Augustine, Anselm, or Paul, the extraordinary simplicity of the Parable, if we are able to read it without *arrière pensée*, comes home to us as a startling fact. The prodigal sins, spends his substance in riotous living in a far country.

He repents bitterly, sincerely, and returns to his father's house. What happens? Is there talk of a ransom, of an account to be balanced between love and justice, of the need for punishment, or for a substitute upon whom punishment must fall? Nothing of the kind. The father clasps the prodigal to his breast, a feast is prepared, and as if to throw into deliberate prominence the unconditional acceptance of the returned penitent we have the episode of the elder brother. And the whole is so organic with the spirit and teaching of Jesus, that it is impossible for us to suppose that the ordinary theological elaborations with which we are familiar were accidentally omitted. Obviously they would be out of place, there is no room for them in the story, they would be foreign both to its substance and form. I venture to suggest that in any reconstruction or development of the doctrine of the Atonement the story of the Prodigal Son will have a larger influence than it has hitherto enjoyed. And the more so because the teaching of the parable corresponds with experience. In the last article I spoke of the test of experience as all important, of the need for checking and testing our religious formulæ by the acknowledged facts of the inner life. Let us check and test this parable by a common human counterpart. Imagine a good father who has a son he loves. This son, the apple of his eye, breaks away from the home life, with its pure atmosphere and influence; he goes, say to London, gives himself up to vice, squanders his money in gambling and drink. At last, overtaken by satiety, the unfailing Nemesis of self-pleasing, his heart fails him. He realises in a sudden flash all the horror of those wasted years. There rises before him the vision of home, of the sorrowing father, the mother who fondled him and dreamed great things for her darling son. Blinded with hot tears of repentance and shame he returns to fling himself, a broken man, at his father's feet,

crying "I have sinned, receive me still." What wise and good father, assured of the sincerity of the repentance, would hesitate to give full play to the pent-up yearning of his long years of anguished waiting, as he drew his lost sheep back into the fold. "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

But the answer of the theologian and moralist will at once be that such forgiveness is too easy. Here, in this parable, we have the basis of the moral theory of the Atonement, and the tendency is to discountenance it as making too light of sin. "On this basis," it may be said, "you can have your fill of the lusts and pleasures of life, and when weary of carnal things you have only to turn round, ask to be forgiven, and all will be well." *"Only to turn round."* There lies the weakness of all objection to this view of the love and forgiveness of God. Only to turn round! He who has tried it knows how hard it is, he who has done it knows that repentance is a fierce flame torturing the soul as it sears its gaping wounds. Let us put the matter in plain and homely language. I have a secret sin; at the heart of my life there remains an unconquered selfishness, some untrampled lust of the flesh that still reigns over my will. It comes between me and God, or if you will between me and the self I know I ought to be. Say what I like, do what I can, so long as that sin is master, so long there lurks an unrest in my soul. I am not at peace; outwardly gay enough, in my heart of hearts I feel an intolerable loneliness. I know I am without God. His love cannot reach me, I cannot reach Him—because of that sin. The self I ought to be is beyond me. I see it but try as I will I cannot come at it. Let us assume that by prayer, or if that is a term that needs interpreting, then by the conscious devotion to

the life of God as revealed in Jesus, the concentration of all good desires in me upon Jesus as my ideal, that the power of goodness within me gains the upper hand, and I am able to conquer the last citadel of the lower self. What then? I shall observe two things. First, that the redeeming quality of goodness grew in exact proportion with the growing intensity of my shame and sorrow for the sin I longed to flee. Second, that when, so to speak, the balance tipped over and the sin lost its power, the tortures of penitence ceased, and there came into my soul a sense of peace and unity unknown before. This is a real analysis of actual experience. What is it but the story of the Prodigal? Penitence is the return to the Father's house, forgiveness, the entrance into the peace of the Father's home. The condition of forgiveness is penitence—a condition involving primarily an inward fact and change, and there is absolutely no other condition whatever. The means God has taken to provoke repentance I must leave to deal with in another paper; here I am only concerned with the *conditions of Divine forgiveness*—and I repeat that if the parable of the Prodigal Son has any significance and any validity, its testimony is emphatic that penitence is the one key to the door of heaven. But you may say, is it possible to meet the pressing sense of the need for pardon—pardon for past sins, as felt, for instance, by John Bunyan—in this simple fashion? There are many who will feel that their own penitence is *not* enough. Let us examine this matter closely. It is one of great importance and bears upon a current fact often noted—I mean the fact that this sense of the need for pardon, even among earnest Christians, does not take the same outward form as it once did. What does the sense of pardon actually mean? When we have stripped off the symbolic phraseology of religion we find it means a sense of harmony between the human soul and God—a measur-

able sense of unity between our human will and the recognised purposes of God as interpreted by conscience. It may take the form of quiet resignation under suffering, or active service for humanity,—but in any case its mark is faithfulness to that view of God and of life which we see and know in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The barrier of sin which separates the soul from God, from the realisation of the higher view of life, has been removed, the love of the Heavenly Father has free play in the heart to which it has found entrance, the soul is growing closer to Him, it is being made in His image, because it has chosen His view of life, His thought, His will. Penitence means surrendering the citadel of self, and at once when we pull down our flag and open the gates, the regiments of heaven, without *pourparler* or hesitation, take possession and man the fortress. Forgiveness does not imply a change in God but a change in man. If the Gospels are to be trusted, God is Love. If God is Love, He is actively, continually, earnestly seeking to open up communication with us. Sin bars the way. When sin is removed His love pours in upon us. There is no question of a legal transaction. We are not here in the law courts, but in the region of moral realities. Divine forgiveness follows upon human penitence, *i. e.*, upon the destruction of sin, as day follows night, automatically, inevitably, by the inner laws of His being. *Our own penitence is adequate, God asks nothing else.* If we doubt this we have mis-read the message of Jesus. We have drawn, perhaps from Calvin, perhaps through misunderstanding Paul, a dark, gloomy view of God. Intellectual misconception, no less than sin, may come between us and the sense of pardoning love. It is because the shadow of a misinterpreted God is passing away, because His Fatherhood is growing clearer in the coming light, that this anguished sense of the need for pardon, even after penitence has

broken or cleansed the heart, is less and less phenomenal of the earnest religious life.

In a little book recently published by Auguste Sabatier, entitled "The Atonement and Modern Culture," the following strongly worded passage occurs:—

"The gravest consequence of the old judicial and legal point of view was that it introduced an irreducible dualism into the Christian conception of God; that is to say, that it destroyed the conception of the Father revealed by Jesus. In fact, men have imagined an internal conflict between His justice and His mercy, so that He was not able to exercise the one without offending the other. Christ, instead of being the Saviour of men, became an intradivine mediator, whose essential office it was to reconcile the hostile attributes within the Godhead, and to ensure peace and unity within God Himself."

There is profound truth in this judgment. We must approach every theory of the Atonement from the standpoint of God's Fatherhood, and no view which obscures that cardinal truth can be held consistent with the Gospel of Jesus.

But perhaps those who have felt the stern side of truth and who see in modern life painful evidence of moral relaxation and indifference to sin, may still hold that the parable of the Prodigal Son is inadequate because it does not present the stern judgments of God. "God is Love," they say, "but God *is* Justice too." True. Yet is there here a complete misapprehension. What is God's judgment? It is not for a moment to be compared to the sentence pronounced by a judge in court. It is not an outward fact concerned with outward laws and taking effect *after the event.* It is continuous, inward, the inevitable counterpart of every sin. That view which piles up the moral account to be squared at some future date, in some great

cataclysm when the world is to come to an end, does not explain the facts or meet the needs of experience. Every day is a judgment day. Every sin carries its own punishment. So long as sin reigns in our heart, whether it be pride, lust, avarice, or any other form of selfishness, there is no real peace, no centre of repose, but the cark of unsatisfied craving, the bitterness of disappointment, the weariness of satiety, loneliness of spirit, the helpless dependence upon physical conditions and surroundings, the terror of death. Alienation from God is the punishment of sin, and alienation from God is hell. So long as we persist in sin there can be no forgiveness, for this alienation is a moral not an artificial fact, and a moral change can alone put an end to it. The wages of sin is death. At every step in the whole problem of man's relation to God we must keep the moral realities before us. We must keep close to experience, to the facts of the inner life.

To say that God is love, that He forgives the penitent freely, instantly, is not to weaken the claims of eternal justice or lessen the terrible consequences of sin. The condition of penitence carries with it, as we have shown, the necessity for the destruction of the power of sin, and as God's punishments are remedial, not vindictive, the very fact of penitence blots out the past. With penitence the first object of God's love HAS BEEN ATTAINED, the sinner has been placed in the right attitude towards Him, his latent powers of good have been liberated, and are free to grow heavenward. He who accepts the Parable of the Prodigal Son as embracing the whole Gospel, no less than the strictest theologian of the old school who paints the terrors of an everlasting torment, are at one in insisting upon the condition of penitence as absolute. God does not, by His nature He *cannot*, yield in this. To love Him and know Him, we must have some points of contact, some likeness to Him, our aims in life must be those He would choose

for us, our thoughts, character, will, must be as His. Sin is the deliberate choice of other aims, contrary thoughts, alien character and hostile will. Penitence is the abandonment of sin. These are the moral facts of the situation. They depend upon that which is woven into the very tissue of our being and the very nature of God. We cannot alter these conditions, and unless God can change His nature, neither can He. Here Love and Justice are one. In holding the moral view of the atonement we may readily grant that the irrevocableness of the moral law needs to have more emphasis set upon it than is now customary, an emphasis which shall in no wise obscure the vision of the Fatherhood of God, but shall throw into more vivid light the terrible loss which sin involves.

In his posthumous work, "The Gospel and Human Life," Canon Ainger deplores the comparative absence of contrition, and traces the modern indifference to public worship to this source.

"Have we learned to sorrow?" he asks. "If not, the remedy is not to look continually into ourselves, analysing and weighing and wondering if we are this or that. Let us look outside ourselves at the Person who can alone win our highest love and awaken our deepest regret."

I quote this passage here, for it puts a question appropriate to our discussion. There is joy in life, deep joy, legitimate even when sensuous, as the old Greek love of being, of the salt spray, the purple sea, and the green hills of Hellas: there is a deep joy in faith, the joy of vision and victory; and in a most real sense these joys have their justification and their root in the sorrow of the contrite heart. There is room yet for the prophet's voice calling to penitence, room yet for the cry of the Psalmist, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

FAMILY EXCLUSIVENESS.*

"And the multitude cometh together again so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard it they went out to lay hold on him for they said, 'He is beside himself' . . . And there came his mother and his brethren; and standing without they sent unto him, and a multitude was sitting about him; and they say unto him, 'Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee!' And he answered them, and saith 'Who is my mother and my brethren?' "†

WHAT was the motive of this visit? Why did the "mothers and brethren" seek out Jesus in the midst of His labours?

The key to the situation lies in the words, "He is beside Himself." If we use our imagination—and in historical retrospect imagination is something more than legitimate, it is essential—we shall readily understand how the matter presented both to Jesus and to the family circle from which He has but lately stepped.

"Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth? I tell you nay, but rather division; for there shall be from henceforth five in one house divided three against two and two against three. They shall be divided father against son and son against father."‡ . . . These words are something more than a prophecy. They reveal the bitterness of a personal experience.

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*This essay, a plea for Christian catholicity in the home, in society, and in the church, appeared in *Present Day Papers*, November, 1902. The author acknowledged his indebtedness to some notes by Dr. Hastings in the *Expository Times* for "suggestions which are here developed."

† Mark iii. 20, 21; 31–33.

‡ Luke xii. 51.

"In his own country he could do no mighty work. A prophet is not without honour save in his own country, and among his own kin and in his own house."*

We cannot ignore the deliberate steps of progression,—first the country, then the kin, then the home; their indication is clear. His *own* people understood Him not. We do not need to assume that because of misunderstanding their affection was withheld, for affection and misunderstanding are not incompatible; but still the house was divided against itself.

In the storm on the lake the disciples, seeing their teacher so calm in the midst of peril, exclaim, "Who then is this?" They echoed an old question, a question that had been asked, sometimes perhaps with a note of irritation rather than of wonder, at least a dozen times, in the carpenter's mountain home. Can you not picture them in Nazareth, the shrewd wise-heads, cautious and not unworldly with all their religion, shaking their heads solemnly as the news trickled in? "He has spoken here, he has spoken there, this and that has he said. And what? repeat it! No, it is incredible; Jesus, who played in our village streets as a little lad, whom we have known all his life, claiming to be the Messiah?"

"Whence has he all this? Joseph? Mary?"—and step by step back along the line of descent they trace His origin. "This is no royal house; it is but a lowly lineage."

"Whence then *has* He all this? Our great ones say it is of an evil source, and they are wise and learned in the law." Doubt yields to scorn.

Many an one had his cart mended at the little shanty, and the son held the nails as the father drove them in, quiet, obedient, of pleasant manner and speech; but still—a carpenter's son!

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* Mark vi. 1–6.

"And they were offended in Him." Offence in the village meant uneasiness in the home. The neighbours talked! Doubtless they spoke their mind to Mary with that discriminating tact for which neighbours have ever been famous!

That the family loved Jesus we would fain believe, that they could not understand Him, feared for Him, desired to hold Him back from what seemed like unbalanced presumption, is after all only natural. More, they regard His teaching as unsound. Did He not break the Sabbath, defy the Pharisees, set good pious people talking against Him?

The situation He was creating for them in the village was intolerable. Talk that is derogatory was no easier to bear 1,900 years ago than it is to-day.

And now when Jesus had gone through every city and village preaching the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God, when He had taken the candle from the vessel and lighted it, and had told the people to take heed to His words that they might hear His message, "come His mother and His brethren!"

Through all His youth Jesus had shared the burden of the family and paid His tribute to the family exchequer. Probably not till that burden was distributed on shoulders qualified to bear it, and not till the means of subsistence were secure, Had He felt freedom to take up His ministry and leave the home which He loved.

Perhaps this is the secret of the thirty years of silence.

Be that as it may, He turned to the people about Him, saying to the man who told Him of His mother's message from the outskirts of the thronging crowd, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" and stretching forth His hand towards His disciples, His "learning knights," as the Saxon version has it, exclaims with the rapture of a prophet, "Behold my mother and my brethren!"

What did Jesus mean? Beneath His mother's mistrust there was the yearning of a mother's heart. Then was not this a cruel rebuff? We get some light upon our question from the story of Martha and Mary; Martha, anxious and troubled about many things and cumbered about much serving, Mary sitting at His feet. The rebuke is to Martha who was doing so much for Him, preparing His meal, seeking to honour the guest, and not to Mary who is apparently neglecting the rules of hospitality as she sits at His feet.

Jesus is distinguishing between the inward devotion to His teaching, and the outward devotion to His person. However kindly and sincere that outward devotion might be it was the inward devotion that He prized most highly.

"Is not this," say the villagers, "the carpenter's son?" Nay! He is no longer the carpenter's son, He is the son of man. He has served the family, now He serves humanity!

He does not seek external relationship, external service. Adhesion to Him must be adhesion not to a carpenter but to a Divine principle. He is preaching the Kingdom. He is setting a new value upon old things. A widow's mite is more precious than uncounted riches, and father and mother, home and friends, all that men hold most close in the treasury of the heart, must be freely yielded in the service of the large family of God.

The Kingdom is within, not without. Its relationships are spiritual and eternal, not temporal and of the flesh alone.

The world, suffering humanity, these who sit like Mary at His feet, are His mother and brethren. To go back to the little mountain village would be to abandon the glorious city not made with hands, that He was to build upon the wide basis of earth. Let us interpret His thought by applying it to our modern life. First to the family, second to the state, and third to the church.

First, then, *The Family.*

It was Jesus who had done so much for the family, who broke the family bonds. He knew that the family, though it was the inevitable focus of social life, and might be the nursery of virtue, could also in its spirit oppose the advent of the Kingdom. Every Englishman's home is his castle; alas! how often is it the stronghold of his selfishness.

Pride of place, pride of wealth, pride of tradition, pride in lands and houses, such pride it is that warps a man's vision and withers his soul. What compromise with conscience, what hardening of heart, what narrowing of aim does it not involve? When the family stands for exclusive possession, then it is that, like a piercing sword, the words of Jesus are directed against it. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he that does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

We would not be misunderstood. There is no argument for the weakening of family ties, no covert attack upon the sanctity of the fireside. In these days when our young people move easily into the larger life of the world, when the world, in magazine and newspaper, is for ever thrusting itself upon our private life, we should be far indeed from minimising in any degree those priceless influences which take their refuge in the home. "The home," as Mazzini has finely said, "is the heart's fatherland." The country in which its influence weakens shall assuredly be numbered, like Assyria and Rome, among the shipwrecked nations. The strange thing is that it is Jesus, claiming humanity for his mother and brethren, who has given us back the home life, enriched with a sweeter and purer joy. If the home be not merely of the earth, if it be the centrifugal centre, not of selfish but of selfless love, then be assured that, however

paltry its outward adorning, it has even now its number and place in a street of the new Jerusalem.

But when the home is walled and barred by exclusiveness, when it is cherished as in itself the end, when we gather wealth for the family and not for Him, when we set our face against public duty that we may win selfish leisure and comfort for ourselves, then do we sin against the Kingdom and utter the negation of brotherhood.

The caste marks of Society, the "creeping paralysis of luxury," the heartless disregard of social justice in the blind pursuit of pleasure, these are the witness to that selfish and ignoble spirit against which Jesus continually strove.

When He stepped from the village into the world, it was that He might strip off from every family all that was degrading and mean. But note that in the purified conception of the family which Jesus has given us there is no lessening of the family obligation. We are not to put the world to rights while the ashes grow cold on the family hearth. Charity knows no limits, but she knows that her origin is in the intimate companionship of family life. We must only be careful not to bind her hands.

Probably for some fifteen years or more Jesus laboured at the carpenter's bench. There is a profound teaching in this unrecorded ministry.

And then *The State*—for the State is a larger family. Do not the same principles apply? Yes, but they are harder to put in practice. The Christian conception of patriotism cuts right across the pagan, and the pagan roots to present day patriotism are not far to seek.

Many Englishmen—they would not, of course, put it so baldly—measure their patriotism by the contempt they pour upon other nations. "Mine is the greatest country, the greatest fleet, the greatest power, the greatest glory, the greatest destiny!"

How this boasting withers under the calm scrutiny of Christ. How low are our standards measured by His, how superficial our estimate of value!

The popular conception of international relations is as yet hardly redeemed from the taint of the prize ring. How splendid are the thews of your champion! How fine your military organisation! How jealously you watch the expansion of Germany, the growing wealth of America, the territorial aggrandisements of Russia. "Christian" diplomacy is a tissue of lies, a mask of dissembling. You play for the common good of the nations when it suits you, but *always* for your own!

As yet, in international politics, the selfish family spirit is almost supreme. When shall we recognise that Germany, France, Russia, these are our "mother and brethren," that in very truth the Kingdom is *within*, and that so it be on earth as in heaven, "supremacy," "the balance of power" are but chaff in the scales.

Nowhere has the church failed more miserably than in preaching the inclusiveness of the Kingdom, the oneness of humanity under the Fatherhood of God.

Must we then do violence to our patriotism? Is it wrong to love our country? Surely not. Yet here again, He who bids us love our enemies, seek the Kingdom that is within, and welcome all men as brothers, gives us back our country as a nobler trust and our patriotism as a purer passion. Nations, no less than individuals, must learn the hard lesson that to seek life it must be lost in the service, not of Mammon but of God.

And finally, the lessons of the family apply to *The Church*. It is possible for that separatist spirit, that negation of brotherhood, which we have noted in the family and the nation, to prevail here also.

Have you ever entered a railway carriage which has come

perhaps some distance and has some occupants who have travelled together? Perhaps you have encountered the chilling stare of disapproval with which your entry is greeted. *Very* slowly and *very* reluctantly rugs and bags are moved to give you room. The knees next the door are aggressively rigid as you stumble past with your burdens. So it is often in the Church. The tabernacle has been erected, its membership formed, and subtly but surely as the original fervours cool there creeps over the fellowship the spirit of family exclusiveness. It breaks out in various directions, it takes various shapes.

Among our social amenities there are certain stereotyped customs which come to be observed, perhaps some of them legitimate and desirable in their origin, but generally tending to limit our freedom of intercourse and to give authority to that caricature of fellowship which we are pleased to call "Fashionable Society!" Likewise in the organism of the Church a certain stereotyping takes place; certain customs come to acquire an increased definition and importance, and, finally, like the liana, to wind so tightly about the Church life as to endager or check its growth.

Professor Schmiedel's warning comment on the congealing process of church development is freshly with us, and has its application here. The spiritual family may become exclusive, then formal, then self-complacent, and complacency in spiritual matters is the doorway of death. A ground-work of organisation there must be, but the essential freedom of spiritual life must never be hampered, nor the limits of spiritual sympathy be defined.

Stephen Grellet filled St. Martin's Lane Meeting-house with prostitutes, and spoke to them of the love of God till they felt the touch of an unwonted purity, and though many good people were doubtless shocked, he was never nearer to his Master than when he did this service.

We come back to the point from which we started. The family of the Church must be the centre of selfless love if it is to be a true spiritual home. Not a few misinterpret Mary's attitude at the feet of Christ. An exquisite mysticism daintily gloved, an atmosphere of vague contemplation divorced from practice, a luxury of worship screened by æsthetic barriers from the ugliness of an unsatisfactory world, are not seldom regarded as true religion. Stephen Grellet, to such starved souls, would seem like Martha cumbered about much service! But Mary was drinking in from the lips of Jesus as He taught, the quickening life of the Spirit, which must by its nature, sooner or later, express itself in the service of fellowship.

THE PROBLEM OF A FREE MINISTRY.*

In approaching our subject, let us briefly anticipate two questions:

(1) Is a free ministry a vital element in our conception of public worship?

(2) Is the Quaker conception of public worship of permanent value?

"An active attitude of soul is of the very essence of a good meeting." This means that we recognise what has been well called "the divine work of worship," the need for that individual exercise of spirit, without which there can be no true communion with God. We ignore the outward help of ritual and of a set service, because of the stress we lay on this supreme individual necessity. Our silent waiting is the opportunity for the prisoned soul to escape into the freedom of spiritual intercourse.

Friends do not assert that ceremonial precludes true spiritual communion. But they believe that in the course of history, symbolism has always tended to become a hindrance rather than an aid to spiritual worship, and that an ordered service, however dignified and uplifting, offers an inadequate and an inelastic substitute for the immediate dependence of the soul upon God.

Apart from all sacerdotal pretensions which we reject as contrary to the teaching of Jesus, we hold that to limit the service of the vocal ministry to one person or to a separate class, is not, as is commonly maintained, a necessary condition of church life.

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* This is part of a paper originally written with special reference to a pastoral letter entitled "Worship and Ministry," from London Yearly Meeting on Ministry and Oversight, 1899, to the congregations and individual members of the Society of Friends.

The freedom of the ministry prevalent in the early days of the Christian Church is still the ideal, and its restriction in the interests of order and dignity, even if justified on the ground of human infirmity, cannot fairly be presented as a survival of the *ideally* fittest or as a stage in *ideal* development. The surrender of the "lay" ministry involved the quenching of the Spirit, the closing of the door to the divine call to prophesy. Friends believe that the restriction of the ministry is at best but a stage to be outgrown, and that it is their office to seek the reinstatement of the higher ideal. The doctrine of immediate dependence carries with it the diffusion of responsibility and an emphasis on "the divine work or worship," which ought powerfully to combat those tendencies to parasitism and to worship by proxy, which a prearranged service of necessity invites.

In spite of our acknowledged weakness, this ideal has been a source of strength in our Society. It is to this special sense of the share and responsibility of the individual in the work of worship, that we must largely attribute that force of character which has given the Society of Friends an influence out of proportion to its numbers.

A free ministry, then, is a vital element in our conception of worship.

But, in the second place, can we further claim that our conception of worship is of permanent value?

To find our answer we need only study the widely prevailing tendency towards more elaborate ceremonial, and the facility with which the element of real worship is lost in musical or other services which do not appeal to the spiritual faculties. This is an age of pleasure. Religion must be dressed in pleasing raiment, or it is rejected as narrow and intolerant. The Sword of the Word must have a velvet scabbard; the inexorable realities of spiritual law must be hidden in a golden haze. The divine work of worship is

too onerous. It must be lightened or evaded by ceremonial, or by the offices of a priest. But spiritual consciousness is not the involuntary emotion produced by music or ritual. It is the fruit of a voluntary effort of the soul, and no evasion of spiritual exercise can give us spiritual life.

The clear testimony to this truth afforded by the Society of Friends in their ideal of worship is, then, of essential and permanent value.*

But are we in a position to present this ideal, not as a beautiful theory, but as a living fact? It is when we come to answer this question that we falter, for we know at heart that our meetings for worship are the weakest point in our church life. The responsibility of a free ministry must be carefully considered in the light of this fact, and such consideration will show that the free ministry presents a practical problem which has not yet been solved.

In thus treating our subject as a problem for solution, we need scarcely be reminded that nothing can be accomplished without pure life, heart surrender, and spiritual power. If these be absent, nothing else can have any value.

A member of another denomination, aware that his own clergyman or minister had passed through a severe course of training, and possessed mental equipment and leisure for his service altogether beyond what any layman in his congregation possessed, would probably feel considerable surprise on discovering a group of laymen in the same walk of life as himself, content to dispense with the minister, and willing to supply the ministry themselves. He would note that these laymen, so far from being men of much leisure or scholarship, were of that class who are chiefly busy all the week in office, warehouse and shop—perhaps prominent

* "The Fellowship of Silence," and "The Fruits of Silence," published recently, may be referred to this connection.—EDITOR.

on Town Council or School Board. He would further note that they gave their best energies to an extensive Sunday School work, without endeavouring to render this in return a support to the Church. He would naturally feel that these men had dared to take upon themselves a very heavy responsibility in thus forgoing the help of a separated ministry, and departing from a universal practice. He would wonder how, with all the many claims pressing upon them, these laymen could find the means and the time to equip themselves for their voluntary service. But his wonder would increase with closer acquaintance as he discovered how few among these busy men gave much time or thought to the ministry, and how readily its claims were permitted to give way to others, which were deemed more urgent.

Doubtless, some things would favourably impress him. The freedom from monetary considerations would come upon him with a sense of relief. He would at once appreciate the marked service of women's ministry. He would learn to recognise that laymen, unacquainted with Biblical criticism or modern scholarship, can gather material for helpful sermons in the practical experience of a busy week, and that the effect of such ministry, coming from a manufacturer, or shopkeeper, or artizan, had its peculiar value. He would notice the existence of a spontaneous ministry of real spiritual helpfulness, and of a type impossible under the conditions of his own denomination, and would recognise that, in spite of the disadvantages of scanty leisure and imperfect equipment, some few of their ministers could fill the pulpit of any denomination with distinction. But these considerations could not conceal from him the fact that a large proportion of the ministry failed in its purpose, and lacked that force and application which better equipment and further knowledge would have given to it, and he

would hardly be surprised when he discovered a prevalent sense of shortcoming. Even if he did not condemn the lay ministry as impracticable, he would infer an inadequate conception either of the value and purpose of the ministry, or of the self-sacrifice it involves.

Without accepting this sketch (which has been constructed entirely from the actual comments of friendly outsiders), as either accurate or complete, we shall unite in acknowledging that self-sacrifice is the price of our ideal. Without this it would indeed be found, as some have pronounced it, a beautiful, but impracticable dream.

Nor does the measure of that self-sacrifice decrease as times goes by. We hardly realise the advantages which the ministers of other denominations enjoy. The rich store of modern scholarship is placed within their reach. Picked men are at their service as teachers and guides. Freed from the worry and distractions of business life, the young man called to the ministry may bend himself whole-heartedly to the work of equipment. Only ignorance will maintain that these advantages are of no moment. At our Summer Schools we learn to measure our loss. Moreover, the standard of training in other churches is being continually raised. The new learning, the work of men of the stamp of Robertson Smith, is beginning to tell. Those who come under this influence, infuse new life into their ministry. Their interpretation of the Bible has a freshness that ours sorely lacks, and the life and teaching of Christ, studied not only in a new aspect, but with unprecedented patience, are no longer presented in conventional phraseology, but with the nervous force of a compelling message.

It may here be objected that learned or eloquent discourses are out of place in a Friends' Meeting, that too much may be made of intellectual equipment, that the Quaker ministry must be of a type by itself, and that in a meeting

for worship the importance of the sermon must be relatively small.

But these objections must not be pushed too far. The cause of Christ can best be served when to the consecration of the heart is added the consecration of intellectual gifts.

Isaiah teaches us the value of an eloquence sincere and free from artificial taint, and experience shows that meetings which are not fed by thoughtful and uplifting sermons will ultimately languish. Let us remember that the phrase "meeting for worship" does not entirely express the purpose for which we assemble. Whilst mainly for adoration and spiritual communion, it is the chief opportunity for mutual edification and instruction. Further, this is an age when it has become more than ever necessary to command the allegiance of both head and heart, especially of the young. To meet this end, we need not only spiritual warmth, but the mental sympathy that is fostered and widened by knowledge.

It is clear upon the briefest survey that the burden of a free ministry is not a light one.

In view of the equipment provided by other denominations, what are our corresponding advantages?

Our Adult Schools and the valuable lessons of experience learnt in other fields of Christian labour, afford an equipment of an *indirect* character, but it would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that our church ignores the need for an equipment that is *direct*. Everything is left to the sense of individual responsibility. The Quaker minister often serves his meeting at considerable self-sacrifice, but his education, his religious training, and the arrangement of his time are rarely controlled by any sense of the special qualification which the ministry demands. His education has been of the ordinary middle-class standard; if he has had any definite religious instruction it has been frag-

mentary; and while he is no less engrossed in business than his neighbour who profits from Sunday to Sunday by the thoughtful sermons of a trained minister, he probably still further curtails his leisure by taking a larger share in the responsibilities of citizenship. He takes on himself more work and receives less instruction. Once in a few years an official exhortation to the ministry from the Yearly Meeting may reach him. His Meeting on Ministry and Oversight takes no steps to develop his gift, and his Elders, mainly confine their office to its negative aspects.

The strong sense of responsibility, and the degree of self-sacrifice which our ministry represents, under these depressing conditions, are an encouraging evidence of life, but the limitations of such haphazard ways are only too obvious.

The church must come to close quarters with the problem: How can we maintain a free ministry among busy men, who feel the exacting toll of increasing commercial competition; and at the same time how can we give to this ministry an intelligence, directness and attractive force, which, though the ministry may be of a different type from that of other denominations, shall at least render it comparable in effectiveness?

In attempting to seek an escape from this apparent dilemma, let us briefly consider the attitude of mind that has led us into our present condition. It cannot be maintained that the sole explanation of our incomplete equipment is the absence of a self-sacrificing spirit. This, no doubt, plays some part, but the fact remains that while many Friends are not alive to the necessity for such equipment, there are others who deprecate it.

We believe the truer explanation lies in that dread of what are called human arrangements to which we have already had occasion to refer.

This dread rests upon weighty reasons, but it must be clearly recognised that the characteristic note of the Quaker Meeting, with its cherished freedom of spiritual dependence upon God, is endangered not by the intellectual equipment of the ministry, but by its restriction to one man or to one type. It is difficult to over-estimate the extent of the mischief which this dread has wrought. In the first place, it has led to a limited view of what constitutes a call to the ministry. It is profoundly true that God does call His servant unexpectedly in the presence of a congregation, and bid him speak unprepared. We may rejoice that Friends have never minimised that supreme prophetic gift. It is also true that no minister can rightly speak without a strong conviction when he rises that what he says is said in season. But the deduction that there can be no call during the week, and no right preparation of the message, is wholly inadmissible. God works in many ways, and Friends living in the freedom of the Spirit should be the last to maintain such an artificial limitation.

The consequences of this mistaken view, now happily losing its hold, have hardly received sufficient recognition. It must be ranked with the dread of "creaturely activity" and the reckless disownments for marrying a non-member, as among the three chief causes of disaster in the recent history of our church. To it must be attributed much of our weakness in the intellectual equipment of the ministry. In its extreme form, this view has regarded the intellect as an enemy to be fought rather than an ally to be welcomed.

It is to this view that we must trace the almost entire neglect of the spiritual gift of a teaching ministry. Marks of preparation in a sermon have been resented and thus, through fear of giving offence, a type of mind that would have lent added definiteness and weight to the ministry has been largely excluded, and it is not too much to say that the

removal of this difficulty alone would call much valuable ministry into existence. The mistaken view which practically limits the Quaker ministry to the prophetic type has caused many needlessly to doubt their qualification. We cherish the memory of those rare spiritual gifts which, in men like Stephen Grellet and Benjamin Seebohm, were so powerfully used in the service of Truth, but while we do well to value them, we cannot rightly assume that lesser gifts do not qualify for service.

Again, we must recognise that the dread of the human element has encouraged the spirit of indolence, and lulled Friends into a belief that the minister need set no time apart for study or definite meditation.

It is, however, not difficult to see that this fear of preparation has even wider consequences than those already enumerated. It is closely associated with that strange haziness which characterises the mind of the average Friend, when questioned as to the historical and spiritual significance of his church. Our ignorance, both as to the facts of our church history with their meaning for the present and the future, and the want of any adequate conception of our spiritual heritage, is not likely to develop the gifts latent amongst us. This haziness has, to a considerable extent, robbed our ministry of its proper formative influence, and given to our appeal as a church a confused character, lacking coherence and a clear-cut outline. A small body like the Society of Friends, which has with almost dramatic suddenness broken down its social barriers and mingled with the world after a century of aloofness, must have very clear convictions if it is not to lose its identity.

We have now discovered our main principle of action, in dealing with the problem of the lay ministry. *If there is to be a strong ministry in our church, a rich soil must be provided for its growth.*

All questions of the distribution of the ministry, especially in relation to declining meetings, or the establishment of new ones, are of subordinate importance. Something can even now be done in these fields, but until the conditions of Church life are so altered that the gift of the ministry is fostered and not discouraged, nothing great can be accomplished. Sooner or later we shall be brought up by the fact that we have not the Friends qualified for the service. As a church, we have yet to learn that a minister is *both born and made.*

[At this point the author dealt at length with the equipment necessary for the work of the Gospel ministry in the Society of Friends. He made suggestions regarding the use of Boarding Schools, after school training and the religious education of adults, and proposed three main lines of study, namely, the Bible, General Church History, and Quaker Church History.]

Let us remember, for we cannot escape the fact, that our free ministry is now upon its trial. No half measures will solve the problem which faces us. We would repeat that self-sacrifice must be the price of our ideal. Sacrifice of leisure, business sacrifices, sacrifices of money, sacrifice of personal ease and comfort. But while nothing that has been suggested can be undertaken without self-sacrifice, there is nothing to alarm. Spiritual insight remains, as it always must, the mark of the true minister, and neither the prophetic ministry, which obeys an immediate call, nor that mystic element which is the quality of a few choice souls, can be imperilled. We seek not to stereotype our worship, nor to tamper with the freedom of spiritual dependence upon God, but to secure such a general condition of church life that spiritual growth shall be fostered, and a high standard of spiritual intelligence shall be maintained. For want of proper nourishment, the ideal of the free

ministry is perishing before our eyes, and we are but seeking a rich and well-tilled soil from which every type of ministry shall spring with a robuster growth.

It may seem that even this partial solution of the problem is difficult and slow. The drudgery of hard work is evident through it all. But this must be. There is no short and easy way; we must go back to our foundations and begin again. We must correct the consequences of past mistakes, and, for a time, at least, there will be much labour with small reward.

This brings us at the close to that which we have never forgotten. We can do nothing without the patience of a faith that sees clear through apparent discouragement to its goal. We need the vision of the end, the sense of a high and worthy aim to spur us on, and, dependent on a Power greater than our own, we need the humble spirit which asks that it may be ever led by the Master's hand.

TO RISE AGAIN—A SERMON.

"The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth."

—*Isaiah xxxviii.* 18.

I REMEMBER once, on a brilliant morning in May, turning aside at the direction of my guide from the barren valley of the Tombs of the Kings, running up from the Nile at Luxor into the boundary of the desert. It was such a day as I suppose one could rarely find outside of Italy—a brilliant deep blue sky, sunshine that seemed to cut like a knife—so sharp were the shadows, so clearly defined even distant objects. As we turned aside from that brilliant sunshine, from that deep blue of the skies which spread like a curtain over the desert, into a narrow rock-hewn passage running into the cliff, we walked for some time upon a carpet of dust which had taken centuries to form,—as silent a carpet as ever decorated the floor of a rich man's house; on either side upon the walls were multitudes of carvings, gradually becoming less distinct, as they penetrated deep into the gloom of the rock-hewn passage. At last we found ourselves in a small chamber, thick with dust; in the middle the magnesian wire revealed to us the sarcophagus of an old king who lived 1,200 years before Christ; and even as we looked, the light startled a creature in that rock-hewn chamber, and we felt the fluttering of a bat in our faces. Our feet had disturbed the carpet of dust, and the air was thick and choking with the fine, impalpable sand of the desert, as it had drifted in through all these years.

Among the writings of the Assyrians there is an account of the goddess Ishtar descending into Hades; and the account, which is in the form of an epic, describes how she went down into the nether regions of the world; and

though I cannot quote the exact words, I give you them nearly: "But the house of darkness" (as the ancient scribe proceeds) "the house of darkness—the house men enter but do not depart from," where "the souls of the dead lie as fluttering wings."

As I remember the experience of that day in Egypt there comes to me some dim sense of the horror of this pall over the future life for those people who knew not the larger hope. Many years afterwards another sovereign wrote upon the tomb of her dead husband, "Here at last I shall rest with thee—with thee in Christ to rise again." That is what Queen Victoria wrote upon the mausoleum of the Prince Consort at Frogmore; and that inscription marks the different measures of progress between the Old Testament and the New, between King Hezekiah and his gloominess, and the hope which is to be, of England to-day.

I do not think it is possible, from whatever standpoint we study the Bible, to ignore this difference, which is so strikingly illustrated, between what is known as the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament the note of immortality is uncertain and hesitating; there is no clear and definite teaching running through its pages; but when we turn from the Old to the New we find ourselves in an atmosphere altogether different; the whole New Testament rings with the certainty of a new hope: the very language of that New Testament is the language of great expectation—how he that liveth and was dead shall have life for evermore. No matter what interpretation we place upon this account which describes the event of the Resurrection, one thing is perfectly clear to the student—that something occurred to introduce a new hope in a group of people who became afterwards the Christian Church—that a new dynamic entered the world with the Christian faith, and that it carried with it the larger hope.

Now it is not at all impossible that we, studying the lives of men and of women who have lived without that larger hope—without the certainty of the future life,—it is not impossible, I say, that we should feel some measure of respect and admiration for their fortitude. It is impossible not to feel admiration for Marcus Aurelius; it is impossible not to feel admiration of a different kind for King Hezekiah. Men have lived this life bravely, with the uncertainty of the future before them; they have bent themselves with their whole energy to the immediate concerns of the present, and have steeled their hearts, strung their nerves, to bear with fortitude the uncertainty that lies in the very mystery of being. Perhaps it is possible for us to say, Is that not really the finer qualification? Is there not a higher nobility in a life which can be lived with such discouragement, that it rings so pure and high? We may shape the argument in a more positive form: we may even say of those who live perfect lives for the sake of future reward, "Why should they, any more than those who would shun evil for the sake of punishment which would follow, be reckoned among the just?"

I remember the story which is sometimes told of an old woman who was found one day setting forth with a brazier of coals in one hand and a pail of water in the other. She was going, she said, to burn up heaven with the coals, and to put out the flames of hell with the water, in order that men might learn to love God for His own sake, and to hate sin for its own sake. Surely we may sympathise with the moral of that story, even though it is somewhat quaintly framed. We can sympathise with the thought that lies behind the story. We recognise that virtue which is not pursued for its own sake is but a starveling thing at the best; we can recognise that those who shun evil simply for the fear of consequences, are contemptible and mean; and yet

does it follow that in the admiration that all naturally feel for men like Marcus Aurelius we are right in accepting their position and their view of life? That is a question to which there is more than one answer; but I know that in speaking from my own experience my answer must be: "No, it does not follow."

There is a passage in the writings of the Apostle Paul which, I think, has a directly remarkable application to us to-day, though written without any thought of a twentieth century audience: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

Let us try and see by examination what the modern application of those words is for us. I want to call your attention to what I conceive to be the most serious development of our modern life. I think if I were to suggest a gospel which, it would seem, the majority of the world accepts as all-sufficient, it would be found in the words, "Eat, drink, and be merry; for to-morrow we die." That, perhaps, puts it somewhat forcibly; and yet it is not possible to look out upon life and not to recognise that Paganism, under a very thin disguise of conventional Christianity, flourishes upon every hand; it is impossible not to recognise that selfishness in all its subtle and varied forms gangrenes society; the love of pleasure has gained added means of satisfying pleasure; the moral and spiritual fibre of this generation has been unstrung by the developments of luxury seducing men from the sterner hands of duty and of honour. Life has become so rich and so many-coloured that men refuse to look beyond the immediate present; they decline to lift their eyes from the dust to the angel who stands there with the crown; they epitomise the allegory of John Bunyan; they persist in stirring up the dust upon the highway of life that it may hide from their eyes the White Presences upon the hills. They live in a

fever of excitement; not one, not two, but many newspapers in a day; they are drowned in a sea of ephemeral literature, with morphine injections to still the conscience. The world is becoming one great maelstrom, whose roar drowns the still, small voice of God. My friends, this is a moment of peril and of trial for the Christian Church. We are confronted with an atheism far more terrible than the barren negative atheism of the cynic who denies God logically and defies the Christian Church with his logic. We are face to face with an atheism that laughs at the earnestness of the old atheist; that cares not whether there be a God or no. It does not trouble to deny Him—it passes by and ignores Him. "Eat, drink, and be merry; for to-morrow we die,"—on the other side those words of the Apostle Paul coming to us across the centuries, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

Years ago, long before the deductions of the morality of civilisation had been introduced into the British Isles, when many savage people who had been brought up in the love of nature and who felt the spell of nature which charms, were brought face to face with Christian missionaries,—hearing the message of those missionaries, they said that it gave a new view to life. Life had seemed to them, until that message came, like the flight of a bird from the cold darkness of a winter night into the warmth of a fire-lit room, and then into the darkness beyond—a momentary gleam of warmth and light, but darkness before and darkness behind. When we are thrown back upon ourselves—we modern pagans, with so much left of the true fibre of those old pagans who knew not the advantage of the Divine authentication; when we modern pagans are thrown back upon ourselves by some sharp buffet of misfortune, when the gay toys with which we have amused ourselves are suddenly destroyed by a blow from the iron hand of fate,

then, too, there may come to us a sense of the dreariness which came over King Hezekiah; then, too, we may realise that we have been living but on the surface of things, and that there is no real thought to our life; then, as we look up, there will be no longer the cruder blessings of our life: the sky will have no star, and the sigh of a wind from the desert will bring the loneliness of despair. In such moments as those (and they come to some of us) it is not sufficient to admire Marcus Aurelius. Is there not something in the heart which asks for sustenance which it cannot define? Do we not reach out with hands of prayer, longing for the shadow of the unseen God to be made manifest in some living shape that it may appeal to us and support us?

I have quoted from King Hezekiah: let me quote from one very different. In Hezekiah there is hardly any profound philosophy. He represented perhaps simply the current ideas of his day and generation. Let us turn to Plato, the supremest of all the Pagans. We find there that same longing which I believe lies at the root of every human heart, of a certainty of a truer knowledge of God—of a knowledge which shall interpret life, and give it its final and its fullest meaning. Plato longed for some sure, some definite word that might bear him across the sea of life's uncertainty. Yet to Plato there came no certain word, and he had to satisfy himself with the shadow and the best of human words. Are we to stop with Plato and with Marcus Aurelius? is there no other significance for the larger hope than the more selfish longing for eternal ease (which is utterly ignoble) or the mere selfish dread of eternal pain (which is no less ignoble)? Or, is there something in those words of Paul full of deep meaning: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"? Is there not something in that larger hope which is essential to the best welfare of the

human race? Is it not necessary for us, that our life shall be taken out of its self-containedness, and brought into unity with some eternal whole? Is it not necessary for us, if our human life is to be lived as it can be lived, and should be lived, that it should be pierced through and through with Divine meaning?

Surely we need some key to our lives! Surely we need that "sure and certain word" upon which we may rely; surely we need some conception which interprets our life to us, and gives it a complete purpose, and adds to it a dignity which may fire our hearts with Divine consciousness and fill our veins with a passion that may not be withstood; and how is that to come to us? From the mere thought of the immanent God? The Greek had that thought of an immanent God; he saw God in nature everywhere about him; and yet the finest ethic of Greek philosophers is based on that cry of Plato: "Oh, for some sure, some certain word!"

What are you in the eye of nature? Contradict her law, and you are a man torn by machinery in which you have got involved. The machine goes on relentlessly and you are dust; you have got in the way of the law; the law annihilates you. The hope there? Surely not, if we probe deep enough.

This human experience,—is that all so clear that he who runs may read? Is there no difficulty,—nothing to conflict with our thought of the universal love? Ah! we have but to think a moment of the inconsistencies, and explain the sufferings, sometimes apparently so undeserved, with which humanity is afflicted, and it becomes surely possible for us, regarding that field alone as our evidence, to rise up here without the knowledge that God is love. No; if we are honest, and take life as it really is, we are bound to see its difficulties and its problems upon every

hand, we are bound to cry with Plato for that divine, that surer word, which shall carry us across this sea of difficulty. And more than that; in our heart of hearts we know it; deep down there is a craving which cannot be quenched, which we cannot extinguish,—a craving for a personal knowledge of God, a groping in the darkness with hands of prayer feeling for Him we love, that through all this tangle of difficulty which surrounds us He may reach down to us the Divine hand, that we may grasp like children, that we may be lifted up out of that which threatens to overwhelm us, to feel and know the love of it. It is not a question of creeds; it is not a question of theology, of orthodoxy or heterodoxy; it is a question of reality, of healing; in a word, of knowing that God is love, to be so conscious of our relationship with Him that it can sustain us no matter what we think or believe. Such a relationship presses right down below words into the very centre of our being, and tides us over and bears us on and lifts us above all the trials and drag and friction of our every-day life. There is not a man, there is not a woman, that in his or her heart of hearts has not known that longing to know God.

Now, friends, I want to speak what is real to me (if it be not real to you), and I want to be understood as speaking not as a demagogist but as talking out of a precious experience to myself, and a longing to have it shared by others. That consciousness has come to me through Jesus Christ; it has come to me after darkness which it seemed to me at one time was never to be pierced.

I have known what it was almost to give up the belief in God; I have certainly known what it was not to believe God in my heart, but only to believe in Him with my head. I have known what it is to believe that there was no reality in the Bible—certainly no reality in Jesus Christ. These things have come back again to me along unexpected paths,

in ways which I had not discerned,—but they have come back and they are clear to me. The Bible has come back to me, through difficulty, in modern theology. Jesus Christ has come back to me in ways which I cannot express in speech. This I do know—even that light from out of darkness comes at times—a heavenly light. I know what it means when the poet says that the heart has felt; I know what it means to feel in my heart the active presence of the love of God that has come to me through Jesus Christ.

I am fully aware that to very many the authority—the ordinary teaching—of Jesus Christ seems a limitation. In the first place the evidence rests upon a superficial basis, —upon, for instance, the verbal, the absolute, inspiration of Scripture; upon the argument from miracle, and from such evidence. These are matters which do not concern me at all. I am fully prepared to admit that there are historical questions in the New Testament, even, which are yet to be solved by closer and higher scholarship; I am fully alive to all the difficulty which has been raised in that connection; but to me these things have ceased to possess any essential interest, because my own evidence lies deeper than that, even though it is an evidence which I cannot communicate to others. From that knowledge it seems to me that there are certain cases of the teachings in relation to Jesus Christ which have not received emphasis by the Christian Church, and which, if they were in future more generally emphasised, would very much reduce the intellectual difficulties which so many of us have felt and still feel in regard to such teachings.

In the first place emphasis has been laid upon the teaching "No man cometh to the Father but by me"; and to a few that imposes a restriction of the witness of God, the narrowing down of the evidence of God, to one personality.

To me it appeals in a totally different light; it does

not mean that at all. God witnesseth essentially in man. He is the immanent God: closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet, who witnesseth in another who is but the garment of God.

But to me, without Jesus Christ, all that thought of God would have remained unvitalised and indefinite. I would have had nothing sure and certain, which, in the tangled maze of things, speaks to me clearly of the love of God. I need that human agent of communication between the human and the Divine; need that interpretation of life, that interpretation of its mysteries, that interpretation of my own being, which is itself the revelation of the heart of God. To me Jesus Christ is not a theological figure, not a factor in somebody's divine mathematics, not an element in an external scheme of salvation, but the unveiling of the Father's face, the audible beat of the heart of God, "the word made flesh," as John has expressed it—God Himself made flesh, in order that man, with his finite mind, might grasp it through nature and the true character and the true purposes and the true will of God; in order that in the first course of evolution there might be introduced that vivid spiritual ideal which alone can lift the human race, which can draw men from the brute to the spirit—lifting them, by language which will not be denied by the great world, to the very Father's house itself. It is to me a curtain drawn aside, so that man has looked through into the ineffable glory of heaven and beheld Him, the glory, the only begotten Son—beheld in Him the very glory of God Himself.

That is not limitation. If we look upon Jesus Christ in that light, not as coming to contradict whatever evidence, in whatever religion, may have been already given of the love of God, but as coming to confirm everything, coming to illuminate everything, coming to focus every-

thing, then it is no limitation, but simply Divine sanction; the seal is set upon all that which man has hesitatingly identified with God Himself. It is the sanction of all that is true in Buddha, all that is true in the Egyptian cult of the day, all that is true in the teachings of Confucius, all that is true in the teachings of Zoroaster; it is the binding together from every point in the world of all the little fragments of light,—gathering together in one great shaft broadcast that which should pierce the selfishness and darkness of the world.

In the twelfth century there lived in France a man called Henry de Suso—a mystic, whose faith later found its highest expression in the writings of John Tauler. "Friends of God" they called themselves; and in many ways they were forerunners of George Fox. Henry de Suso, a Spaniard by birth, was found one day kneeling before the image of the Virgin Mary, and as he prayed he fell into a trance, and he cried out in his prayer to the Virgin; the Child she held in her arms was manifested as a reality by stooping down and kissing him; and even as he prayed the Child took life and form, and the Virgin smiled down on the kneeling mystic; even as he prayed the heavenly kiss was imprinted upon his forehead, and for one brief moment Henry de Suso was permitted to enjoy such ecstasy. Then the dream passed. Is this simply a crude, childish Roman Catholic story? I think we have misread its meaning if we so account it. Of course, it was a dream, and of course it was not actual; but Henry de Suso was experiencing that deepest longing of the human race: he was longing for a view of the face of God; he was longing that the hand might be stretched out which should touch his heart-strings, and set those chords in motion which respond only to the deepest passion—the passion of personal devotion, and personal obedience, and personal knowledge; and, friends, believe me, our faith will

remain diffuse and impotent,—our power as a religious Church must remain short of what it might be, unless our faith and our love and our devotion, all the deepest energy of our human nature, can find a personal focus, a personal living thought of God.

And, as we advance, that thought of God revealed in Jesus Christ—does it not mean that life acquires a new significance? The ideals are then no longer misty, but vivid. The grandeur of God as it is born to us, so to speak, and upon its human side, is unfolded to us; and we know the meaning of the Divine sympathy, and the Divine redemption, and the Divine passion. We see that it overfloods our life, and carries us beyond the gates of death —that there is no end, but all seems one with the eternal love of God. It does not explain for us in scientific terms all the difficulty and the conundrums of life; it does not tell us why the stars are made or where they are made; it does not explain for us the conservation of energy; it does not explain for us the force of gravity; it does not read for us the riddle of protoplasm: it leaves these questions still to solve—but it gives us an assurance, in spite of life's difficulties, in spite of life's problems, in spite of the shadow and the darkness, that God is love. Love not cold, not passionless; it reaches out of itself, seeking to save. Our life is lifted by it out of the uncertainty which ruled the thought of the Hebrew king. We are made to feel that our lives are part of the great Divine plan of which we see but a momentary glimpse, and therefore may read it wrong; through the æon God is working out His great purpose,—working it through us if we are willing to put ourselves in line with Him,—if we are willing to stand up and say to Him, "Take my hands and use them; take my lips and speak with them; take my heart and use it as a lamp of love by which Thy light may shine in this dark world of selfishness."

Life is then no longer a flash in the pan; it is no longer a hollow mockery, something at which fate laughs with a hollow laugh as we struggle and strive. It is something with a Divine meaning, with a personal tongue. Even as we believe this, and as we yield to the belief, and as we go on winning victory after victory over our selfishness by the help of God's love, even so does God's face, which seemed like darkness before us, become transparent. They are no longer brazen gates; death hath no sting and grave no victory. "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore." Physical death may come to us; but immortality remains, and God remains, and His love remains, as shown to us in Jesus Christ; and our work remains, no matter where, and we go on working with Him, through the æons of day, seeking to find and to realise that prayer which He taught us, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

[NOTE.—This report was compiled from notes taken by a Philadelphia Friend, 27 x. 1901. The report was not revised by the speaker.]

IN MEMORIAM.*

NINETEEN Hundred and Four has taken a heavy toll from the larger "Bootham" which counts past as well as present scholars of its fellowship. Under circumstances of peculiar pathos, several "Old Boys," all young in years, have obeyed the silent summons. Their life-work just begun has been cut short abruptly and we still feel the pang of parting, feel perhaps as an intolerable burden the weight of that dark mystery of life which grows no less with the gathering years.

In the gloomy waters of Lough Neagh, seven young people fought death for each other, plunged suddenly from the innocent pleasures of a picnic into a strife which opened on Eternity. For the readers of this journal the memory of that catastrophe centres naturally round the names of two Old Bootham boys, Hugh William Pettifer Catchpool and Herbert James Green. When they died in a vain attempt to save the others, they were but nineteen years of age. In their unselfish heroism, face to face with death, they honoured the school from which they came, and enriched her records with the emblazonment of a fine example.

But not only to them do we render the parting salute. Under differing circumstances, less dramatic though hardly less poignant, there are other names to inscribe on the roll. Herbert Andrews, an only son, about to be married, and about twenty-four years old, passed with an unfaltering courage, from the light of a young life, with all its hope and

* This, the last essay that John Wilhelm Rowntree published, was written for *Bootham*, the Journal of the Friends' Schools at York. It appeared on February 7th, 1905.

interest, to the unknown land; James Edward Rowntree, always cheerful, never complaining, suffering long months of terrible pain, was released at length from his prison of tortured flesh, leaving a little daughter and a widow; and Henry Ernest Grace, at thirty-four, buoyant, cheery, ever sympathetic and unselfish, was taken after a few brief days of agony, in the full tide of strenuous labour for God and man, leaving a widow, but no child.

Faith falters in such a recital. The strokes of fate seem so pitiless, so cruel and unmeaning. Can it be that man is "cast as rubbish to the void"? One is tempted at times to take hard views of God, and fall back upon a self-contained stoicism as the only way of life: to say, "Come what may, I do my duty," and leave it there. But that is only the first counsel. Wisdom comes with patience. I have before me a reproduction of an old German print. It is a copper engraving by an artist who, flourishing at the beginning of the sixteenth century, saw death ride across Europe in the appalling disguise of the Plague—saw it in an age when science was superstition and medicine quackery, and the powers of evil were personified, to the terrified imagination of an ignorant people, as devils bearing all the sombre marks of their subterranean degradation. The artist, Beham, was an agnostic, in full revolt against the social order, and his engraving, terrible in the fierce significance of its symbolism, expresses his cynical estimate of life. The print presents us with Adam and Eve standing on each side of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The stem of the tree is a skeleton with a grinning skull, one arm becomes a branch from which Eve gathers the apple, and the serpent, coiled round the neck of the skeleton, bites the apple with poisonous fangs as Eve plucks it. That was a sad conclusion to come to in the morning light of the Renaissance! We cannot, we dare not, be content with it. To let death

poison life and draw between us and the sunshine its cloud of morbid horror, is to commit a moral suicide and reduce cosmos to chaos. We might brave it out for a time, but sooner or later the wheels of progress would run down, for the spring would be broken. We may reverence Marcus Aurelius, that granite peak in a range of ignoble hills, but to insist that his brave spirit can teach us an all-sufficient philosophy is to deny the most obvious facts of experience. Nay! the very lives taken from us call us to a sunnier view of faith, a stronger belief in the dignity and purpose of being. Courage, unselfishness, and above all, love, that root of faith and unity of all the virtues, found in them their witness. Every man knows in his heart that there is no greater thing in the world than pure, unselfish love. Death cannot conquer, nay, he teaches ever that love is supreme. Good men do not die. Their lives are as the tearing of the veil, they show us something of that which is eternal, for if here love is greatest in the heart of man, must it not be greatest in God Himself? And if greatest in Himself, then let the mystery of His will be never so dark, we may gird ourselves each to his life's work with something more than courage. Love bridges death. We are comrades of those who are gone; though death separates us, their work, their fortitude, their love shall be ours, and we will adventure with hope, and in the spirit and strength of our great Comrade of Galilee, who was acquainted with grief and knew the shadows of Gethsemane, to fight the good fight of faith.

"Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
Paid with a voice flying by to be lost in an endless sea."
"The wages of going on and not to die."

No! give me

"The wages of going on and not to die."

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